

5th Sunday Easter

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5-22-11

It is now 5:18 pm, EST time on May 21. For several years, 89 year old Harold Camping of Oakland California has been predicting that Judgment Day will happen on this day. Mr. Camping says there is "infallible, absolute proof" that a worldwide earthquake will occur at 6:00 pm this evening, that the 3% of the world's people who are "saved" will be taken up in the Rapture, and that the remaining 97% will suffer and die until October 21 of this year, when Christ will return to destroy the world completely. 2000 billboards proclaim this message, which Harold Camping has discerned after many years of careful study of the Bible. (If a gigantic earthquake will end our Canadian geese problem, I'm all for it!)

I'm thinking today of a different date: 75 years from now, it will mean far more than Harold Camping's May 21. On March 29, 2009--a chilly, damp Sunday afternoon--hundreds of us gathered on this site, shovels in hand, to break ground for this marvelous new church building. On that March 29, members and friends were invited to bring a stone that would become part of the foundation of this building. Each stone was to be inscribed with a name--your own, or perhaps that of a deceased parish member--stones that would permanently remember all those who were somehow part of this new church.

That was March 29, 2009. Actual excavation began on May 5. Not long after, it was time to pour the huge slab. A day or two before, the contractor carefully and respectfully placed 355 stones on

the ground just behind the altar. They are now a permanent part of St Bernadette Church, and long after both Harold Camping and we ourselves are dust, those 355 stones will give silent testimony.

In the second reading, St. Peter writes, "Come to Jesus, a living stone...and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house." When Peter wrote these words, there were no church buildings at all; believers would meet in private homes or outside—it was easy for the Christians to realize that they were the building blocks of a spiritual house.

But even now, we can hear St. Peter speaking to us at this Mass: "You people of St. Bernadette, your wonderful new church is not the parish; it's a building. Each of you is a living stone, because St. Bernadette Parish isn't bricks and mortar, it is a people. The parish will be about as prayerful as we are prayerful, about as welcoming as we are welcoming, about as generous as we are generous, about as caring of young people as we are. St. Bernadette is not an "it" or a "they." St. Bernadette is a "we." 680 households of believers, actually. *'Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.'*

And while we are being built into a spiritual house here, Jesus is preparing many dwelling places in heaven. What an image: Jesus constructing a space with our name on it among the saints and angels in eternity.

Well, perhaps Harold Camping is right and the giant earthquake will strike in 25 minutes. Or not. But every day is God's gift to us to

get our life right, to pray, to love, to forgive, to be forgiven, to be an active stone in the Body of Christ here at St. Bernadette.