

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at Evensong & Benediction  
The First Sunday of Lent  
February 14, 2016  
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A fallout of the internet age is the loss of the papers and writings of holy people. Gone are the centuries when spiritual direction was done by letter. Among the various papers left by a holy and religious priest early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the resolution he made for Lent one year. He had written, "I renew my good resolution that the future may settle me into a holy religious. Hitherto I have been driven by every wind, deceived by my own vanity, and nearly wrecked...Shall I give up at my failures? *I am still in the same house with Jesus Christ.* Through Him in the Blessed Sacrament I must attain perfection. Every Sunday morning, at first coming into my room, I will make ten minutes' reflection, keeping before me my special object...the cure of the tongue, selfishness, and bodily ease."

This Lenten resolution was remarkable because such a holy man had written it. No one ever remembered any lack of charity in his speech or self-indulgence in his conduct. And the reason why they never noticed these things was that *he did*. And the reason he did was because he remembered that *he lived in the same house with the Lord Jesus Christ.*

How can we live rightly with our neighbor (or even before that, with ourselves?) It is by remembering continually that we are still in the same house with Blessed Jesus. How different things will look when we come from Christ to others or even when we deal with our selves! Saint John Chrysostom delivered a memorable sermon about this house. "Paint your house with the colors of modesty and humility. Make it radiant with the light of justice. Decorate it with the finest gold leaf of good deeds. Adorn it with the walls and stones of faith and generosity. Crown it with the pinnacle of prayer. In this way you will make it a perfect dwelling place for the Lord. You will be able to receive him as in a splendid palace, and through his grace you will already possess him, his image enthroned in the temple of your spirit."

Our Lord, of His Own deliberate will, came to live in the same house with us: in our world, in the Church, and in our souls. By His Own deliberate limiting of Himself, He can only build His Church of human beings on human wills. Christ builds His Church on earth upon the love and fidelity of those to whom He has

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united Himself by His grace. When we see the Church being torn, that is because these key ingredients of love and fidelity are missing. The building of the Church depends on our relationships to the Lord and our strengthening of our brothers and sisters.

Almighty God does not provide for our baptism and then place us on some deserted South Seas island where there are no other people! In our weakness and weariness we sometimes wish it were so! (Make it a *warm* South Seas island as well, Lord!) But living with other people is part of the condition in which God has placed us. And that means living with other people is part of the vocation in which we are to attain sanctity and fulfillment as God's children. We can live rightly or wrongly with ourselves and with other people. You do not need me to tell you that! But the secret to *right* living is to recall always that we live in the same house with Jesus Christ.