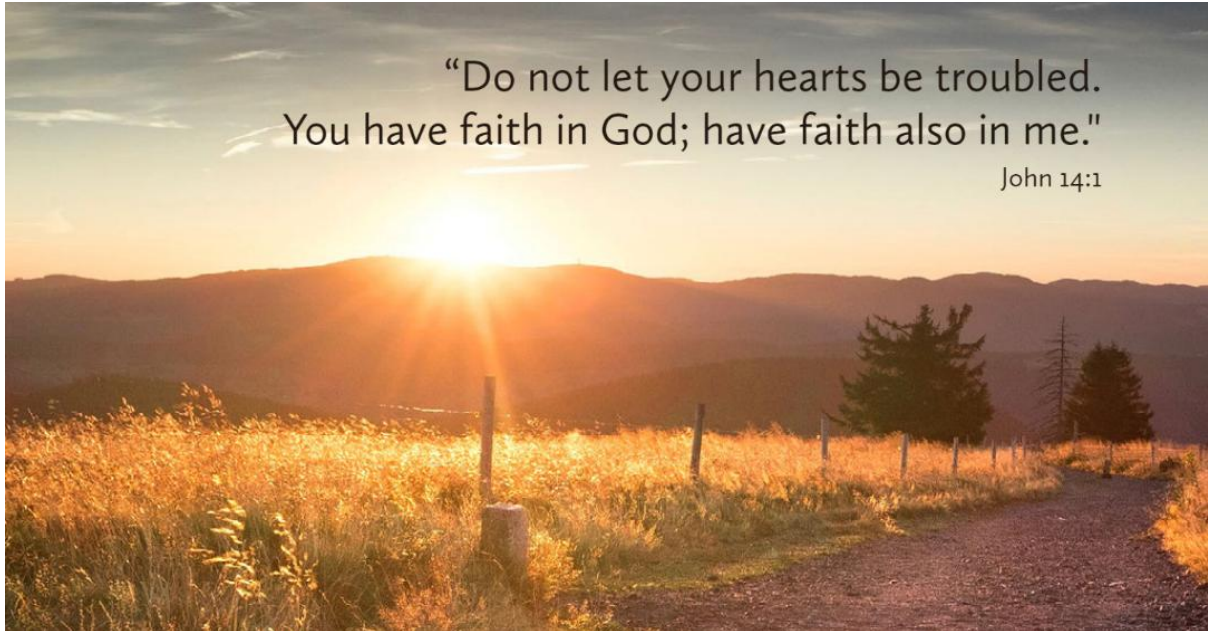


Homily for the 5th Sunday of Easter (A), May 2nd – 3rd 2026

Fr Justin Driscoll, Co-Pastor

Ballarat East Parish Eucharist enrolment Masses

5.00pm & 9.00am Ballarat East, 10.30am Buninyong (Baptisms)



One of the occupational hazards for me is funerals! From the beginning of this year until the end of April, I’ve celebrated 35 funerals and as I reflect on our Gospel for this Sunday, do not let your hearts be troubles...*there are many rooms in my Father’s house...* it’s the comfort and familiarity of this passage from John 14. More than half of the funerals celebrated have this Gospel and it’d been chosen by those who’d prepared their own funerals, carefully selecting music, readings and prayers. For others it was selected by the loved ones of the recently deceased. This Gospel offers reassurance and hope – that in the fullness of the reign of God, there is a place for every one of us and the hope that we can be in the presence of the risen Jesus for eternity invites to follow his way, truth and life. Building and construction imagery abound in this imagery and in our other biblical texts today.

One of my favourite tv shows is Grand Designs initially the series hosted by Kevin McCloud, but in more recent years both the Australian and New Zealand series. Sometimes their budgets seem to be endless with flexible working arrangements and relationships that seem to be able to withstand the most stressful financial situations and cramped living conditions, I love the creativity, innovation and collaboration amongst architects, builders, tradies, and

all who make a contribution to each one of these grand designs. Increasingly I appreciate those whose grand designs are designing and building for a sustainable future.

At the same time, housing affordability and rental availability are amongst the greatest economic and social challenges of our day. The Australian institute of health and wellbeing reports high demand, for social housing, particularly in major cities, results in long waiting lists, with priority given to those experiencing homelessness or fleeing violence.

Perhaps it's no surprise that Jesus uses such familiar building and construction imagery in his teaching about the reign of God – from early on in his ministry he'd been recognised as the Carpenter's Son. Over previous years Pope Francis invited us as the People of God to consider the kind of churches we were building – not the bricks and mortar, as beautiful as ours might be, but he called for churches to be oases of mercy, calling on us to build a Church which is more merciful and less judgemental, talking about God "in a more accessible way," avoiding "fortress" mentalities. He too used building imagery to describe his hope and vision for our way of being. He invited us to contemplate the notion of a Holy Door, "a *Door of Mercy* through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instils hope." One of the most powerful images that he proposed was the church as a field hospital after battle - *this is the mission of the church: the church heals, it cures. . . The mission of the church is to heal wounds of the heart, to open doors, to free people, to say that God is good, God forgives all.*

So what are we building here? Is it a faith community of hospitality and welcome, Inclusion and belonging, service and outreach. Are we building bridges between faith and culture, dialogue with difference and diversity? Are we building a spiritual house? As the living stones, the People of God, that we are, what is our grand design, what is our vision for who we believe God wants us to be – embodying the mansion that has many rooms, many dwelling places. The mission of the reign of God calls us to work together, walking together in faith, which is the synodal way, with a growing sense of co-responsibility for the mission.

As people of "the Way", pilgrim people, we journey as the late and now saint Oscar Romero reminded us that

*We may never see the end results,
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.
We are prophets of a future not our own.*