

*Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation — if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

*For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner", and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

1 Peter 2:2-10

At a previous parish I served, we had a pre-school and every week we had chapel with the 3- and 4-year-olds. To be honest, those times with the kids have been my very favorite among all the things I've done as a priest. I particularly remember one Ash Wednesday, where I wanted to share something about what we mean when we say remember you are dust and to dust you shall return, because that's a somewhat challenging concept for most 3- and 4-year olds.

So, I brought in a big rock and I asked them what's the difference between you and this rock? A human body is mostly water of course, but the non-water parts are made up of a handful of other elements, especially carbon and calcium. Basically, we are pieces of limestone. And what I told the kids is that people are rock and water and the spirit of God. It is God who took the elemental stuff of creation and formed it into life and once our spirit leaves our bodies, they return to the elemental forms from which they came. That's why I love this passage from Peter's first letter, because we are, literally. Living stones!

And Peter's message speaks to something important about life in Christ, namely the importance, the necessity, of being in relationship with other followers of Jesus. We are meant to be built up together, not only for our own benefit, but for the furtherance of Christ's ministry and for the final goal of God's salvation, the bringing together of heaven and earth in a new age. As Christians, we can, of course, be alone. But we can never be a Christian all by ourselves.