Well, first of all, I would like to wish all the ladies of our parish a very happy virtual mother’s day.

Not this year, but where do you like to stay when you go on vacation? Do you look for a luxury, 5 star hotel? Or do you prefer to camp? While some would argue that there are other things that matter more than where you stay, your lodging choice can make a big difference in how the trip goes, and we tend to have our own preferences. And so we read the reviews, hoping for reasonably priced places that will fit our list of wants. It can be a tedious process, whether you are researching the best place to park your family RV or finding the perfect beach front hotel with ocean views. In the end, we want to know what to expect, and hope to find the perfect fit for our needs to make a truly memorable trip.

In our gospel reading for this morning, Jesus is in the midst of what is known as his “Farewell Discourse” to his disciples. The stakes of his journey are tremendous, and his explaining them to the disciples has caused understandable grief. In this passage, we hear Jesus offering words of comfort, reminders that his trip will not separate him from his disciples forever. Instead, quite the opposite will be true, they will be reunited with him. Naturally, the disciples want to know what it is going to be like, and how to get there. Thomas is the one who is bold enough to ask the question.

It’s natural for us to want to get a glimpse of what God’s house will look like, or at least to imagine some of the splendor that is to come. And, like we sometimes do with our vacation plans, we can get caught up in the lists of amenities and luxuries. We want to book our room, and secretly hope we’ll be upgraded to a penthouse suite. Our view of eternity is almost like we’re guests in God’s hotel.

When we’re a hotel guest, we view things as a customer. Things become a business transaction in which we give something to the hotel chain in exchange for services. If the services don’t meet our standards, we can call the front desk and complain to the manager in the hopes of some resolution because we are a consumer and want to be free from the responsibilities we normally have at home.

However, Jesus’ response to the disciples question makes it pretty clear that what he’s talking about is a bit more than a vacation reservation. He responds to Thomas not as a travel agent trying to sell the upgraded room, but as the Savior who knows what is truly at the heart of the matter. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” Jesus says. In other words, “I’ve got you covered, Thomas. Trust me, it’s going to be good.” Jesus knows that the reservation will be made by his death and resurrection, that grace will cover all the costs. He knows he’s doing much more than playing travel agent. What Jesus is offering isn’t a short term vacation opportunity, or even a fantastic deal on some eternal real estate. He’s not really selling anything at all. Rather, he is inviting his friends to come and live with him. They aren’t going to be paying customers, they are going to be houseguests.

What Jesus is really talking about in this passage is relationships. Not just in the far off future of eternity, but in the very immediate reality of the present. He reminds the disciples that through him, they are already connected to God the father. They have begun an intimate relationship with their divine host. Through Christ, they have laughed with God, dined with God, walked with God. They have witnessed God’s incredible powers to heal and reach out into the world. They have truly experienced God, not as some future being to meet, but as someone who is a part of their lives even now.

Hearing this passage today, we are challenged to consider what our relationship with God is most like. Do we approach it as a hotel guest with a list of desired amenities and consumer mentality, or do we approach it like we are going to visit a dear friend or family member. We remember to pray more when there is something we particularly want or need, And if we’re really honest with ourselves, we’re pretty quick to complain to the management when things aren’t the way we like them, but we realize that our time with God involves giving of ourselves, to God and to each other so that we can all grow together as a family of faith.

The invitation to us has already been made some two thousand years ago, and will extend into eternity. But we don’t have to wait to accept it. We can live as God’s houseguests right now, we won’t find better amenities anywhere else than in God’s grace and love. So we’re invited to come and stay a while, there’s a place prepared for each of us.