

JUNE 23 2025, FATHER PETER TURRONE

The Lord said to Abram:

"Go from your country, and your kindred, and your father's house, to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you."

My brothers and sisters,

Very often I have an opportunity to go and say Mass in retirement homes. And, speaking with the different people there, listening to their life story, many people are at the age of which Abram was, when he was called by God to go off on this new mission.

So, at least in the west, the way we've been formed is that we think that at a certain age, then we can pull back from everything, we can retire, and then we can rest. But Abraham had a very different experience.

The Lord called him at a moment when he thought that his life—where everything bit that he had to do in his life—you know, had finally come to an end. It was precisely there that the Lord called him to a mission which is significantly greater. And because of that mission, we're all here.

In fact, we call him the father of the faith, the father of our faith. And when the Lord showed him all the stars, right, he said that those were going to be the future generations that would come from him. And we're included in those stars as well. Each and every one of us, you're present.

So, in order for him to mark these occasions, in order for him to mark these great moments, right, in salvation history, he built an altar.

So, he built an altar.

So, what is an altar? Well, altars were built for different reasons. We have an altar that's built, again, for the sake of worship. We have altars that were built for the sake of obedience, for listening. You can see this throughout his life. We have an altar that was built for reliance on God, recognizing God's providence. And then we also have altars that were built to remember the appearances of God.

So, in this particular case, we heard in the first reading, that he built this altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. So, called many times, and along his journey, he built this altar. So the altar is for that reason.

Now, years ago, I remember going to visit a family, and this was the first time I had gone—I had gone to a family—this was the beginning of my faith journey, and I remember going into the house, and then the wife said, "Why don't you come and take a look in this room that I have?"

So, I went in with a friend of mine, we walked in, and there was this huge, beautiful picture of the Virgin Mary. So, Rosa Mystica, there was a huge crucifix, and there was a rosary, there was a Bible open, there were these statues of the saints, and there was a holy water font there.

So, I saw all of this, and I thought, "This is interesting." I've never seen anything like this in a house before. I mean, I've seen a crucifix up on the wall, and different things, and a picture of a saint, or a statue... but nothing like that.

So, she went on to explain, and she said, "This is the place where I come to pray. This is the place, a special place in my home, where I withdraw from everything, so that I can have that intimacy and solitude with God. So that I can—then from here, I can go back, and do what I'm called to do as a wife and a mother, and do whatever I have to do in church."

I thought that was very fascinating.

So, this idea of home altars, or these little spaces, are very powerful. And this became, let's say, "rediscovered," during COVID, because people couldn't go to church, and it was very painful, so more and more people started posting about this, and they started writing articles about it.

And I thought it was very fascinating, and it's very good, because we know that the Church—the home—is **domus ecclesiae**. So your home—so what you do at home—is supposed to be linked with the Church itself. So this is a way of bringing what you do on Sunday into the home. And many people started doing this.

So, they obviously didn't have an altar for Mass, but they had a sacred space that was dedicated, and then when the priest was able to, he would go and bless the home. So we would bless the home, and then you can also bless that space, and then you would have different things there.

So, for us as Catholics, we would have, obviously, the Word of God. Because the Word of God is our nourishment. And we need the Word of God to be able to know what God is thinking. And we need to know what God wants for us. Right, what he wants to say to us. And therefore, the Scriptures must always have a prominent place in this sacred space.

And we also need a crucifix. Because we know that the crucifix is the altar on which Jesus Christ died. In the same way the Father had chosen Abraham, and sent him off, Jesus was sent by the Father to come into the world. And what did we do? We put him on the altar of the cross. But we know that that place, which was cursed, becomes blessed, because God himself, who was innocent, is nailed to it.

We have a candle. Again, the candle can remind us, again, Jesus is the light of the world. "Light from light, God from God." And therefore, if you have your baptismal candle, or a candle that's there, it reminds us of who we are—we're the light of the world, the salt of the earth...

And then having holy water there, a holy water—a little font or something—is very good because we can go and we can take that water, and then we can use that water to remind ourselves of our baptism, asking God for protection from evil as well.

Having an icon. You know, icons, especially in the eastern part of the Church, many, many beautiful icons. They see them as windows into the infinity. Right? Windows that bring us closer to God. And if we have a different saint, if you have a particular patron, then you can always seek, see, and look for a beautiful icon.

They have icons that are—that are not really icons, because an icon must be written, and it must be—so it must be written, and the person who's doing this, the iconographer, is praying when they're doing this, so they're not mass producing these things. But they're fasting and praying. And they produce the most beautiful, beautiful works. Not so much for art, but for worship. So, the idea of having an icon there is very helpful.

Having some incense. We know in Scripture, throughout the entire Scripture, from the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, all the way to the last book of the Bible, we see the importance of incense. Incense is a physical reminder of our prayers that are rising up to God.

So, it is possible. I remember when I was in the seminary in Rome, we found these beautiful little—these little—incensors, and what you did was, you'd put a piece of coal in the bottom, and then you would just put a piece or a grain of incense on the top. So—or the candle, from underneath, rather. So the candle would release the heat, and it would release this fragrance, so that your room, or the space you were in, would have this fragrance that would remind you also of church. It would connect you to church, and remind you that your prayers, our prayers, are being lifted up to God.

And then, of course, good spiritual reading. The Bible is the Word of God, but we have many *lectio divinas*, which are the lives of the saints, on the Scripture, and what God has done in and through our saints. So having a good spiritual book on the life of a saint can be very helpful. They can help to increase our motivation.

And then a journal. And then having a place, having a book, where we can write down our thoughts... It's a good place to write down our prayer intentions. You know, people ask us, friends ask us, to pray for them, so we can write all these things down and keep them there. Who knows? Maybe one day we'll be called to be canonized saints, and they'll have something to look at in the future.

So we ask God for this grace, again, to recognize what the importance is of bringing God into the home, and even having a dedicated space, which is a place where we can glorify God, in silence and solitude.