

Easter 5C 2016

All Things New

For the past several weeks, the second reading of the liturgy has been taken from the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible. Although this is one of the most interesting writings of the Bible, it is also the most misunderstood. For example, many people think of Revelation as a book of predictions about the future. But the Book of Revelation speaks about the past as much as it does about the future. It assures us that God's victory over the powers of sin and death has been won on the cross.

For example, two weeks ago the Book of Revelation presented us with a vision of the crucified and risen Christ as a lamb who had been slain, and we heard the heavenly court singing: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing." The victory of God has been won on the cross, and no matter what the powers of sin and death do from now on, they cannot conquer us because the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, has won the victory for us.

But the Book of Revelation also speaks about the future. In doing so, it does not predict what is going to happen, nor does it tell us when the world will end, as so many mistakenly think. Rather, it gives us a *vision* of God's final victory. It gives us the first inkling of what will be.

And so in today's second reading, the Book of Revelation provides us with a vision of the new heaven and the new earth that the resurrection of Jesus Christ will bring about. The prophet John, the author of the Book of Revelation, sees a new, transformed Jerusalem coming down from heaven, adorned as a bride. And he hears a voice calling

out: “Behold God’s dwelling is with the human race; God will dwell with them, and they will be his people.”

The New Jerusalem is the church cleansed and made holy by the blood of the Lamb. This New Jerusalem—sanctified and made holy—is the bride of Christ. And in this New Jerusalem, God’s holy people, God will live and dwell. There will be no more weeping and sorrow, no more mourning or pain, nor will death have any power over us because God will make all things new. This is why today’s reading concludes: “Behold, I make all things new.”

This is the central message of the Book of Revelation, of today’s liturgy, and of this Easter season: *God makes all things new in Christ*. In God’s way, in God’s time, in a manner we cannot imagine, God makes all things new. And when God makes all things new the whole of creation, the whole of this infinitely vast universe, will be changed and transformed. When God makes all things new, we will be changed and transformed. When God makes all things new, we will be holy and sanctified, and God will dwell in our midst.

This is the vision and message of the Book of Revelation. This is the good news of Easter. This is the meaning of Christ’s resurrection, and of our resurrection. We have been changed. We have been transformed in Christ. God is victorious. Death and sin will be destroyed, and all will be well. But if this is what we believe, and if this is what God is doing for us in Christ, then why are we afraid? Why are we anxious?