

22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year “C” *You have approached Mount Zion*

August 31-September 1, 2013 Cathedral of St. Paul

Readings: Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29; Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24; Luke 14:7-14

In the Old Testament, Mount Zion was synonymous with the place known as the City of David, and the Jewish Temple Mount. It represented the dwelling place of God, the holy city Jerusalem. This highest point in ancient Jerusalem signified that you were standing on holy ground. Mount Zion also houses some important Christian sites, including the Cenacle or Upper Room, the place ascribed by tradition to the Last Supper, the Church of Dormition of Mary, the site of the appearance of Jesus before the high priest **Caiaphas**, as well as Peter’s denial of Jesus where today stands a Church named St. Peter in Gallicantu (lit., the singing rooster).

What does it mean to draw near to Mount Zion? Do we dare draw near to our God who is seemingly so far above and beyond us? Our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading is reminding us that the assembly of the people of the new covenant is ultimately not on earth, but in the heavenly sanctuary. The tension between the “now” and the “not yet” of Christian existence is clearly illustrated here—the author speaks to those who are still on the journey to heaven. But since through faith they already possess in an anticipatory way the good things to come, he can also speak in a sense as if they have already arrived.

I fear that most Americans do not see the purpose of the journey, but only in reaching the destination. Why on earth travel by train, when an airplane is so much faster and not that much more expensive? Lewis and Clark spent two years traversing across this great nation of our on horseback and canoe, covering 4,600 miles. And we get angry when our flight is delayed a half an hour.

*Quia Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.*<sup>1</sup>  
“Because You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1.1

This is my favorite quotation from St. Augustine, whose feast we observed last week. I fondly recall my trips to the seminary library, consulting the card catalogue, then wading through countless shelves of books, all for the purposes of locating the very same Latin phrase just referenced that took me all of .20 seconds on Google when writing this homily. And yet, are we any less restless today than 25 years ago, even with the assistance of technology?

Our reading from Hebrews is both a reminder as well as an invitation to see that our journey towards the Father is partially being fulfilled in the present moment and that the journey has its own meaning, and not only the destination. At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness, and the universe itself will be renewed. In this new and heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among us, and the visible universe will be transformed, restored to its original state, and at the service of the just.<sup>2</sup>

Do you want to be in a world in which righteousness dwells, in which happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace that arise in our hearts?<sup>3</sup> Our Gospel tells the parable of a wedding where the moral of the story is that when we take the lesser place, we will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Our journey now on this earth is leading somewhere beautiful, but we also are called to help bring about that Kingdom of Righteousness by seeing our earthly life as not only a preparation, but as a foretaste.

Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth, the expectancy of a new earth should spur us on to help bring about God's kingdom on earth. For us to draw near to Mount Zion, we can begin right here and now. Our faith helps us to become the leaven in the world. Our reverent celebration of the Mass and

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<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. # 1044, 1047

<sup>3</sup> See *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican Council II, # 39.1

sacraments here at the Cathedral can serve as a beacon of hope to a world that struggles to find the Sacred. He dwells here; we give due worship and honor to God by means of the supreme sacrifice of the Cross, made present in the Holy Eucharist. “The Eucharist is an entry into the liturgy of heaven; by it we become contemporaries with Jesus Christ’s own act of worship...”<sup>4</sup>

In his monumental book on the liturgy, the then Cardinal Ratzinger drew important comparisons with the Jewish temple on Mount Zion, helping us to see that “on the altar, what the Temple had in the past foreshadowed is now present in a new way...thus it brings heaven into the community assembled on earth, or rather it takes that community beyond itself into the communion of saints of all times and places.”<sup>5</sup>

This is why we behave in a certain manner in Church and dress in a particular way. Our reverence is shown by how we dress at Mass, shunning daily clothing and putting on our Sunday best for God. This space becomes for us symbolic of the new Jerusalem; Sacred space draws us to that which is above; it becomes as it were, a slice of heaven. We need this slice of heaven, for it helps us remain focused on the end for which we were created.

With Labor Day weekend upon us, our thoughts invariably turn to the future, a new season a new academic year. Time marches forward and in faith we can see that time moves towards a purpose, not aimlessly, but it marches towards the heavenly homeland to which we are called. Let us pray for the grace to see that He is with us on this journey, and amidst all the changes in our lives, our loving Father is the constant, guiding us along the path.

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, page 70.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, page 71