

5th Sunday Easter Year “C”

April 23-24, 2016

Behold I make all things new

Readings: Acts 14: 21-27; Rev. 21:1-5; John 13: 31-35

One of the most powerful scenes from the 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ* was when Jesus met his mother on the road to Calvary. He quotes the line contained in today’s second reading, “See mother, I make all things new.” The filmmaker used his artistic license to show flashbacks of Mary rushing to the side of a very young Jesus who had fallen, hurting himself. “I’m here,” she said in the flashback, and also in the film on the road to Calvary. It remains one of the most poignant films scenes in my life.

I mention this by way of introduction because our second reading today is from the Book of Revelation. It has always been perhaps the most difficult book to interpret due in part to stylistic and poetic elements. For those of us who prefer thinking in a linear manner, it is nearly impossible. Yet it also contains some beautiful images, worthy of pondering slowly, over time, again and again. One such image is that of the heavenly Jerusalem. There, the one on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

What does it mean for the One on the throne to “make all things new”? Our second reading is essentially a description of God's eternal kingdom in heaven under the symbols of a new heaven and a new earth. At the time Revelation was written, Jerusalem had only recently been destroyed.

The New Jerusalem and bride are symbols for the church in her eschatological (end-time) union with the Lamb. This is the only time in the entire Book of Revelation in which God Himself speaks. He declares that all said in the previous four verses will in fact be accomplished. It will be made new.

This passage recalls a passage from Isaiah 43: 18-19: “Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; See, I am doing something new.” The context there is a situation in which Isaiah was telling the people that they had no time to continue to glory in the past Exodus from Egypt when it has no application to the present time. In the present, they have been released from Babylonian captivity. God’s saving action is not all past, but it is repeatable!

As we heard in our first reading from Acts, we will not enter the Kingdom without undergoing many hardships. The liberation experienced by the Exodus event is a liberation needed in our lives today. How often indeed, do we desire to start fresh, to have a clean slate? Whether it is with respect to our house, our office, our closets, our coursework, our yards or gardens....whatever it may be...we desire to make it all new again.

So too, only more so, with respect to our faith. Much more is at stake than our grade in geometry class, or even a fresh start at a new job. What is at stake is our life of grace, our interior lives with the Lord, nourished by the life of grace made possible through the Sacraments of the Church.

Our second reading also contains this line: “Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God.”

It is precisely through sacramental grace that the Lord dwells with us, enabling us to become more like him, fortifying us to wage the battles of life with confidence and resolve. And when necessary the grace of the sacrament of Penance enables us to start fresh with God. It also allows us to make a positive move towards starting fresh with others as well.

We do not want old wounds to fester; we desire closure. Sometimes, we just need to make the first move towards reconciliation, regardless of whether we felt it was our fault

At some point, it does not matter. Our energies will be much more fruitful if they are directed towards making better. May God lift our spirits and renew our zeal to live the Gospel message in a spirit of joy, trusting that indeed the Lord will make all things new.