

Lift Up Your Hearts

Third Sunday of Easter

April 10, 2016

During the seven weeks of Easter the second reading is taken from the book of Revelation. The vision of the book was given to the Apostle John who at the time was exiled to the island of Patmos. Last week we heard how John was called to write down that vision to give hope to the people of emerging Churches that were experiencing severe persecution, that were being forced to do emperor worship. They are told to persevere, to be faithful, to be steadfast in the face of their trials and tribulations.

In the face of these trials and tribulations those being persecuted are given a glimpse of heaven. What a shot in the arm! In this week's second reading we hear of a countless multitude in heaven giving praise to the Lamb on the throne, a reference to none other than Jesus Christ, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and blessing." They are given an audience with the King. They are challenged to return to celebrate with the faithful on the Lord's day. In their celebration they are joined by the Saints who have gone before them. In this setting every creature in heaven and on earth and under the sea and in the sea, everything in the universe cry out, "To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever," to which the four living creatures answered, "Amen."

The book of Revelation was not just meant for those being persecuted. Neither was it meant, as some do today, to predict only future upcoming events. It is meaningful in all ages, and especially for us today. We all come to celebrate the Lord's day, this weekend, bringing with us what life has brought us in the past week. Some of us experienced sadness, sorrow, pain, losses, disappointments, unexpected problems. Some come with a heavy heart from losing a loved one, sickness, injury or a bad diagnosis. Some have had a great week filled with happiness and joy. Some have had a blah week with nothing special. ***However we come we know that the best place to be in the face of our trials and tribulations is heaven. What better place to be? And the closest place on earth to being in heaven is to celebrate together at Mass on the Lord's day, right now.*** We are meant to celebrate together, not to go it alone. Mass, which begins with our opening song, is meant to bring order and focus in our lives

that are filled with messiness and chaos. We are challenged by the Word of God. ***After the gifts are presented, when Fr. Jim says, "Lift up your hearts," and we say, "We lift them up to the Lord," it is as if we are transported to heaven. What a shot in the arm for us! What we celebrate here is also celebrated in heaven. What we do is cherished in heaven. We have an audience with the King, the King of Kings. We are not simply going to Mass. What a difference this makes in how we prepare and the attitude with which we approach Jesus. Think of how much better our children and grandchildren would think of Church if they thought they had an audience with the King. I say it again. We have an audience with the King! Beyond that we imagine the Saints are in our Church, in the rafters, at the doors, sitting next to us, praising God and cheering us on with the praises of our second reading today. We praise God with our Holy, Holy, Holy in which we claim that heaven and earth, all that is created, are filled with your glory. We experience bread and wine being transformed before our very eyes, on this very altar, into the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ. We pray that we will be as excited as Peter today in the Gospel, when he realized it was the Risen Lord on shore. We sing 'the Lamb of God' and ultimately end our Eucharistic prayer with the great, "Amen," the Amen that expresses God's faithfulness to us and our trust in Him.***

Today when Fr. Jim says, "Lift up your hearts," and we answer, "we lift them up to the Lord," let us, like the early Christians who read John, be transported into heaven. We cherish this experience of our audience with the King so we will confess our sins, recommit our faith and offer our trials and tribulation in union with the King. Today when we are sent out with the words, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord," we will know that we will have that needed shot in the arm. Then, in the face of and despite our trials and tribulations we will be empowered to go out to truly change the world. We will be like the disciples in the first reading who rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer for the name.