

# Homily for Easter V, Year C

## April 8, 2007

**“Grant O Lord that Thy Word only may be spoken and Thy Word only received, +In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Amen.**

*From the Epistle today: Revelation 19:1- “I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heave, saying “Alleluia”. And from today’s Gospel: St. John 13:34- Jesus said, “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”*

I. Sometimes maintaining HOPE is not that easy! During any given week a priest is challenged with many opportunities to give into despair. After all, we are faced with and hear people’s problems, their frustrations and expressions of hope-less-ness. Sometimes the news of our own Episcopal Church or the Anglican Communion is discouraging. Sometimes just watching the evening News is enough to make you want to give-up and “abandon all hope”. But I graduated from HOPE COLLEGE over there in Holland, Michigan. So the word HOPE is very important to me and to my faith.

Despair is exactly the reason that St. John the Divine wrote this strange Vision we call the Book of Revelation. It is a book to encourage Christians with a hope and vision of God’s Kingdom.... a place immensely better than what we live in now. Handel wrote his “Messiah” with such a thought in mind, to overcome despair and encourage hope. The Alleluia Chorus was written to inspire a vision of hope. Did you know that Handel meant his work to be a meditation on Holy Week and Easter, not Christmas when most of us hear it?

And he wrote it in just 24 days! (Obviously he didn't sleep much!) He said to a servant who caught him in tears over the text, "I've seen all of Heaven before me and God Himself". That is what the Book of Revelation is trying to do also: To inspire hope.

- II. As we move this Eastertide to Ascension Day (May 17<sup>th</sup>) & Pentecost (May 27<sup>th</sup>) the readings for the Epistle are from the Book of Revelation. That Scripture gives us the same vision that SS. Paul & Barnabas have in the reading today from the Acts of the Apostles. It is a vision of God's Kingdom of Salvation here present on Earth. It is a vision that you and I must try to live as the Body of Christ in this Parish Church and in this neighborhood. But we must admit we live it in CONFLICT. We are torn between the glamour and comforts of this temporal world... while knowing full well that by our Baptism into the death & resurrection of Jesus, we are one foot in the Eternal Kingdom where all hardship & despair has been overcome by the Love of God. It has been said that as Christians we live in an 'in-between' time- the kingdom already ours by Baptism, yet still waiting for Jesus to come again. Some of us also have to admit that we at times get caught up too much in only one of these worlds. But there also is the HOPE; there is the vision of St. John's Revelation.
  
- III. Revelation is a vision of NEW HOPE. This Scripture makes us each ask ourselves if we really want such hope, and if we answer 'Yes', are we really ready for it? Do you really want a hope-filled life, and are you ready to live in hope? To say 'Yes' is to be willing to surrender to this vision, it is to surrender to Jesus' command in today's

Gospel that we must love as He has loved us. And we know what His love is all about- it is NOT about getting, but about giving- His Love is Self-Sacrifice. The sign of that is the cross itself...an instrument of shameful death becomes for us a sign of God's eternal Love.

And we have to note how very opposite this is from the temporal World in which we still have one foot. That world teaches us to 'look out for #1', 'win at all costs', and 'shoot first, ask questions later'. That is a world where we discourage tantrums in children, only to favor them in Adults. Crude language? No manners? Who cares? 'As long as I don't hurt anyone else it's a free country, isn't it?'. But I ask you is that what Christian Freedom is all about? No. I remember the old prayer from Morning Prayer, where we prayed to God "whose service is perfect freedom". To a Christian freedom comes from being a servant, just like our Lord.

- VI. While I will admit that I have over-stated my case a bit, it is to point out to you that the Bible shows us HOW RADICALLY different the way Jesus loves from the way we love. With Jesus there is only one concern: to love us by reconciling us to God the Father. Jesus is willing to loose his life (Sacrifice) so others may find God and be reconciled to Him. Yet some of us, even in His Church, feel we owe nothing to people we do not know or like. The difference between these two positions is Charity. Scripture teaches us to tithe, but that is not Charity. A tithe is what is just and required. If we go beyond the tithe, then we've entered Jesus' act of Love: Charity. Justice is what we have to do...Charity is what we do when we don't have to. Charity is what we choose to do even if we are not obligated to do it.

So this is the Vision of Hope of God's Kingdom from the Book of Revelation. It is that Jesus has called us to choose a Kingdom based on His Sacrificial Love: A love that lays down its life for others, even when He didn't have to.

This then is our HOPE- not a College, but to LOVE as Jesus loves: Loving others and each other, even those we do not know or like, even when we don't have to!

*"I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in Heaven, saying 'Alleluia'." (Rev. 19:1) "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (St. John 13:34)*

**+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**