

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Acts 14:21-27

Rev 21:1-5

Jn 13:31-35

Some people tend to be either confused or fascinated by the Book of Revelation, regarding it as absolute reality or the writings of someone who has been nibbling magic mushrooms. Actually, it is full of spiritual truth. Early in the book, heaven's population is restricted to 144,000 celibate males, but at the end of it, heaven is the home of all who embrace God's truth and have been obedient to His will no matter from which nation, caste or class they have come.

God's will is to make all things new, and in keeping with the Gospel of John, this newness in Revelation is also described as a marriage between heaven and earth. The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven to earth adorned as a bride for her husband. There will be no more sea, because evil, that was thought to reside in the sea, has had its absolute grip over God's people destroyed by Jesus the Lamb of God through His obedience to God's will. The New Jerusalem is the Kingdom of God and for those who live according to the values of the Kingdom, life is changed at our physical death, it does not end, because Jesus promised that those who love Him will never be separated from Him.

When Paul and Barnabas told the citizens of Antioch that the new life of God's people is open to the Gentiles, shock waves spread through the Jewish listeners. Their view was that Gentiles never have been, are not, and so cannot ever be, members of God's chosen people. Yet what Jesus, Paul and Barnabas preached was exactly what the prophets of the Old Testament preached, namely that all people who worship, love and obey God and who live on earth as though they are already in heaven, are God's people.

So how are we to live as though we are already in heaven? At the heart of God's new age is a new covenant, a new exchange of promises between two parties. At the Last Supper Jesus invited all His disciples to share in the marriage of heaven and earth. In the new covenant something is required of us and we receive something in return. What Jesus requires is that we love one another in the way He loves us, and in return we receive the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through us. But how does Jesus love us?

Jesus does not control or manipulate His disciples. He allows us to make choices which include questioning the need to love and obey Him, ignoring Him, betraying Him or giving us time to work out His will for us. Throughout all this He will patiently continue to love and support us until we recognise the Truth He has revealed. We can only love others in this way if we let go of our self-centred desire to be in control of everyone and everything we encounter in our life. In living as a self-centred controller, we are not living as our true self. Our true self is when we give God to each other and receive God from each other. This is how we can raise people from spiritual death to new life as people of the Resurrection.

This is the rule book of God's new age. The love of the new age creates unity because it

embodies forgiveness and mercy. It doesn't hold on to grudges but urges us to get up and patiently work with those who have hurt us until there is a resolution.

Jesus said that, "I and the Father are One" (Jn 13:30). He also said that His disciples were not of this world, as He was not of this world (Jn 17:16). He prayed that all His future disciples might be in unity with each other so that the world might know the love that Jesus and the Father have for God's people (Jn 17:22), and that the Church is the visible expression of God's love for the world.

Church unity may seem like the impossible dream and reaching for the unreachable star, but let us not forget that because of one man, scorned and covered in scars who strove on with His last ounce of courage, it can be done. That man was from Nazareth, not La Mancha. We in the Ordinariates throughout the world are the living proof of what real Church unity looks like - the unreachable star that has been reached.

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*May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025*