**Third Sunday 0f Easter Year C 2016**

This is not so much a homily as an exhortation.

It is an exhortation that is not so much based on the beautiful gospel we have just heard as on the second reading from the Book of the Apocalypse.

It is an exhortation to understand and value that every celebration of the Eucharist draws us to participate in the great liturgy described by John. To do so more consciously and deliberately as it were. Uniting ourselves in a great act of praise uniting Earth with Heaven, Angels with Humans, and mythical creatures with every creature on earth.

It may help us do this if we allow our imagination to be gripped by John’s vision each time we recite or sing: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!

This is put rather eloquently by Dostoyevsky’s character of Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov:

“Look at the divine gifts around us: the clear sky, the fresh air, the tender grass, the birds; nature is beautiful and sinless [yet] we alone are godless and foolish [and so] we do not [easily] understand that life is paradise, for we need only to understand and it will come at once in all its beauty.”

Have you noticed your own response to beauty? Wherever beauty is manifest we feel drawn to as if by some magnetic force. And when Saint Dionysius says: “Beauty summons all things to itself” he reminds us that beauty is a revelation of the divine. It is an attribute of God; one that attracts us.

The vision described by John in the Apocalypse calls this to mind. It is as if God is summoning all that is beautiful, all his creatures, to share his glory.

Yet John’s vision is not so much a description of heaven as a remote place; somewhere beyond our present grasp. His words are reassuring us with dramatic language and imagery that our instincts are right when we are drawn to what is beautiful, true and good. When we allow ourselves in other words, to regard even the mundane, discouraging and ghastly realities of daily life through the prism of beauty. When we expand our view of life beyond the confines of a veil of tears and towards a foretaste of the wonders and glory of God.

It is worth noting that John wrote this vision during a time of exile. He was exiled on the small even cramped Greek island of Patmos, no larger than 10 x 5 miles. It was here that his vision broadened into the realms of the infinite.

Just imagine him looking out to sea and allowing his hope to expand with the distant horizon.

Another witness to God’s love had a similar experience from another Greek island. This time it was the monk Porphrios and he was on Mount Athos:

“ I looked at the clear blue sky, at the sea which stretched out endlessly, at the trees, the birds, the butterflies and all the beauties of nature:… and I shouted out, full of enthusiasm: Christ is Risen, Alleluia!”

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