

## Reflection for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

*I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb. (Revelation 21:22-23)*

It is important to note that since Easter Sunday, our second reading on Sundays has been taken from the Book of Revelation, and this Sunday the Sixth Sunday of Easter is the last Sunday in the Easter Season that the second reading is from this Book. It is interesting to note that it is only in Cycle C that the Book of Revelation is included in the Sundays reading for the Easter Season. So, this year as we find ourselves with readings from Cycle C for our Sunday Readings, we can grow from this experience of having five weeks of readings from the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation.

The title of the Book of Revelation comes from the first word of the book, in Greek it is “*apokalypsis*” which means unveiling or revelation. The Book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic book in the New Testament, and it occupies a central place in Christian eschatology. Apocalyptic writings can be defined as prophesying the end of the world, or the end times. Eschatology is the part of Theology that focuses on the last things, such as death, judgment, and the final destiny of the soul and humankind. It has been said by many scholars that the Book of Revelation is the most obscure of all the New Testament Books. The author, St. John, resorts regularly to expressions and categories of thought that seem strange, and even disconcerting, to Western readers. The title of this Book establishes a connection between this Book and the apocalyptic tradition that can be found in the Old Testament writings of the Post-Exilic Period. The Post-Exilic Period covers the years 537 BC to 430 BC and is the time of rebuilding the nation and the Temple walls in Jerusalem, this is after the Babylonian Captivity. The Books that are found in the Old Testament that are a part of the Post-Exilic Period are 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Joel and Zechariah. Most Scholars would only see Joel and Zechariah as being Apocalyptic writings. It is important to note that this time period and the writings that come from this period, as a whole have an impact on the style and message of the Book of Revelation.

The contents of the Book of Revelation can be seen as so important a matter that ultimately it could only be shared by God who chooses to convey the information to St. John through visions by an intermediary Angel. Our Second Reading this Sunday taken from the Book of Revelation 21:10-14,22,23 clearly demonstrates the mysterious nature of this Book, but it also provides us with a very good example of the visions that St. John receives from the Angel. The vision that St. John has this Sunday is of the Holy City, Jerusalem. This vision is not of the earthly city but of the heavenly city. This vision is centered on God the Father and God the Son, who is the Lamb, and how all is renewed and transformed by them. In this reading the New Jerusalem is described, and in this description, there is no Temple in this new city, because the Temple is God the Father and the Lamb, God the Son. This message reminds us that in heaven and on earth all must be centered and focused on God, for all to be right in this world and the next.

May we not forget that we as a people of faith took a 40-day journey of prayer, fast, and abstinence to be ready to celebrate the resurrection of our Savior. Now we are in a 50-day Season of celebrating the resurrection of Christ, may the visions of the Book of Revelation, that are shared with us in the Sunday Readings during this Season of Easter provide the same type of focus and support that our prayer, fasting, and abstinence provided to us in the Lenten Season. For this Easter Season finds its meaning and purpose in the saving act of Jesus Christ, dying on the cross and rising on the third day. The visions found within our Sunday Readings this Easter Season, taken from the Book of Revelation, truly reminds us of what this loving act of Jesus Christ has done for us, and how we are affected by this action in the past, present, and future.

It is fitting that this weekend before the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord we would have a reading that reminds us of what the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ is offering to all of us if we take up our crosses and follow Him in this world. In fact, all the readings that we have encountered in this Easter Season that are taken from the Book of Revelation, have provided us a vision of the Heavenly Kingdom that Christ has purchased for us by His death and resurrection. There is much that one can take from the Book of Revelation, but if we focus on what is presented to us in the Book of Revelation in this Season of Easter, we receive a message of hope and a vision of the Heavenly Kingdom, New Jerusalem.