

Second Sunday of Easter
Year C

Acts 5:27-32
Psalm 150
Revelation 1:4-8
John 20:19-31

Last week was an opportunity for us to gather and bask in the glow of the Resurrection. It was a time of great worship and fellowship, of having the chance to break bread with our friends from OPC and to chat with people we don't see often. Easter Sunday was the climax of a wonderfully spiritual Holy Week. Now, the time has come to get back to the routines of our lives. While we enjoyed the break from everyday patterns of activities, the reality of work and ministry have returned.

When John wrote about his vision from the Isle of Patmos, his audience was living in the midst of a cruel world which was beginning to resist the missionary efforts of the apostles, while still trying to live as people of the Resurrection. They were persecuted by those around them and, at the same time, trying to make sense of their faith in an era of uncertainty. They all wanted to be faithful to what they had been taught of the expectation of eternal life with Jesus while facing the discouragement of the reality they saw. It was to these people that John was writing. It was to these that his words of encouragement were directed.

In his opening to this apocalyptic book, John sets the tone for all that will follow in the book of Revelation. He greets the seven churches to whom he is writing as one who is well known by them. There is no introduction - just, "hi." And, while we know of other churches in Asia at this time in history, John is writing to seven specific churches. We can be sure that he knew of others, but was not instructed to write to them.

John begins by greeting these churches in a very Trinitarian form - first acknowledging that God is eternal. This statement, "from him who is and who was and who is to come," is very reminiscent of saying in the Letter to the Hebrews that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This is the fundamental core of our belief that God has always existed and always will exist. This eternal God was and is in charge of all the world and will have the last word. Twice in these few verses, John reminds us that God is and was and is to come. God is in control.

We have engaged in spiritual highs during Holy Week. We have looked to the cross and to the empty tomb. But now, we are faced with the world around us and might ask how these two realities can co-exist. We know God defeated evil, yet evil surrounds us. How might we go forward with this dualism?

First to be acknowledged is that we know how this all ends. By faith, we have seen the endgame. John reminds us that God is the Alpha and Omega - the beginning and the end. We know that, in the beginning, God created this world and all that is in it. We also believe that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. With these two thoughts, we can boldly claim our place in God's

plan. Like watching a movie that we know has a happy ending, we can survive the drama the characters must endure. The struggles of this life are just a prelude to the glories which await us.

As troubles befalls our world, and we see that every day, we can go about our lives with a grin, because as Paul Harvey used to say, we know the rest of the story. We know who has the last word. Above all, our grins will make those discouraged in this life curious. They will want to know why we are grinning. Let them ask - it will give us the opportunity to share the joys of an Easter life.