

Easter VI

Cycle C, 5.22.22
Acts 15:1-2, 22-29;

Revelation 21:10-14,22-23; John 14:23-29

GOD'S DWELLING PLACE WITHIN YOU

The Book of Revelation which we're hearing throughout this Easter Season is a fascinating piece of literature. Its imagery ranks up there with Star Wars and Battlestar Galactica. This apocalyptic literature may seem far-fetched, but it gives us insight into the Kingdom of God -- not a far-distant future reality, but a way of living and proclaiming that Kingdom in the here-and-now. Today we hear this description: *The angel took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God.*



This city has three main characteristics: ***It's a city with no temple.*** In other words, there's no need to build a special place to encounter God, for, in this city, God will be encountered everywhere, especially in the hearts of his people.

It has no need of sun nor moon because the glory of God gives its light and the Lamb is its lamp. All other sources of light vanish before the brilliance and glory of God. Even the natural world is transformed by the power of the Resurrection. And, ***it's an open door city.*** *There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west.* Everyone can enter from any side. No matter where you come from, an open door awaits.



There's a charming poem written by a woman, a mother, entitled "The Gift" by Louise Gluck. She reflects on the back door of her own house:

*Lord, You may not recognize me
speaking for someone else.
I have a son. He is so little,
so ignorant.*

*He likes to stand at the screen door,
calling oggie, oggie...
entering language, and sometimes
a dog will stop and come up
the walk, perhaps
accidentally. May he believe
this is not an accident.
At the screen
welcoming each beast
in love's name, Your emissary*

Who but a mother would take note of such a moment? And who but God would give that observant mother the grace to see, in the chubby hands of a child slapping the screen in a kitchen door, a sign of God's heaven breaking in upon the world? Our world has constructed a history of closed doors and fears, a place where cities and kings fight without ceasing,



in concealment, in endless lies and conspiracy theories. In the Book of Revelation, the mystic author John dares to tell us to open the doors and to start a life of reconciliation and encounter. Look around our world today; there is a huge thirst for love and justice. The problems overwhelm us: there are migrants fleeing for their lives, the numbers increasing by

thousands each day as Ukrainians are forced from their homes and country; corrupt governments ignoring the needs of their people; people in Buffalo, NY, shopping for their increasingly expensive groceries, who never returned home because of a gun-wielding young white supremacist; there is rejection of anyone who is different,



the systematic annihilation of the environment. We can't solve all of these. But we can dare to open the door and start a life of reconciliation and encounter everywhere we are. We can live the Kingdom of God here and now with the conviction that God is present, not just up in heaven, not just in the temple, but here between us, with us, in His Creation.

Obviously, these gates are nothing like that screen door in Gluck's poem, where a young child stands with bright eyes and sticky hands and welcomes a neighborhood dog. Yet, every mother knows it's not the shape of the door or the width of the door or gate that matters. And St. John would readily agree. It's the love that one encounters at the door of a house that matters, the love that

prefigures the great welcome that awaits God's faithful people at the gate of heaven. Sometimes we overlook the importance of the welcome that occurs at the doors of our homes. There's a wonderful book called "Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers" which I often recommend to people as a good resource for praying together as a family. In this book there is a beautiful prayer that draws our attention to something we take for granted: the door into our home and the welcome it offers.



Listen to this prayer suggested to be prayed at the door of homes in the Easter season: *O God, make the door of this house wide enough to receive all who need human love and fellowship; narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and strife. Make its threshold smooth enough to be no stumbling block to children or to straying feet. But strong enough to turn back the tempter's power. Lord, make the door of this house the gateway to your eternal kingdom.*

Think of this in terms of today's reading from Revelation. If the walls of heaven are comprised of twelve hefty gates, can't screen doors and front doors and kitchen doors reflect the Kingdom of God as well? What about the doors of a church building?



like our church doors that were given such a magnificent facelift? Do we who come through these doors enter with hearts open to the other parishioners we encounter in prayer at Mass? What about the doors of our nation? Has a kind of amnesia settled in making us forget that at one time all our families and ancestors were immigrants and aliens here looking for a nation to open its doors? The doors of God's kingdom are open to all nations, races, peoples and tongues. In the city of God there are no foreigners, no undocumented immigrants. All are welcome in the City of God.

All these doors of ours can and should reflect the gates of God's kingdom. After all, our homes are sacred places, domestic churches, holy ground. Our homes of love. And where dwells love there dwells God. Home-grown love. A mother's kind of love for her little child. And all the

other kinds of love form the sturdy bridge that connects our house on earth to the great house of God in heaven. We ought never forget that each of our homes is a tabernacle of the presence of God. Heaven comes to earth and love takes hold in our hearts.

In the third chapter of the Book of Revelation the author creates an inspiring image. He depicts Jesus saying. *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.* For a quarter of a century, I've witnessed our Church, and now our new Community Center, and most significantly, all of you, as just such a place and people of warm welcome and open hospitality.

Brother Mickey McGrath, artist and Oblate confrere, found this message printed on a banner in a European church he visited on one of his pilgrimages. He transformed it with his own unique calligraphy. May it be our "open door" policy:



John Kasper, OSFS