

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time – C

This Sunday we return in a sense to Ordinary Time which actually began right after Pentecost a month ago, but each of the Sundays that followed until this one were solemnities. So now it's just a regular Sunday in Ordinary Time.

But we are still witnesses of the same profound mysteries of our faith. We remain on the journey through this life to what St. Paul refers to in our 2nd reading today as a “new creation”. We of course await this new creation, when God will ultimately triumph over evil and sin and death and bring about a new and perfect world free of all those dark things. Our faith teaches this; we all know it, at least on some level, but the idea of a new creation – of heaven, of eternal life – I think can usually seem very abstract to us. We cannot really even imagine it, because it is completely beyond the realm of human experience and understanding. And St. Paul also refers to it

elsewhere as: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor. 2:9)

Sometimes I think that because heaven seems so abstract, so hard to conceive of, that it can almost be difficult to muster up any excitement about it. There are of course times in life, and every life has them, during which we experience suffering – many different kinds of suffering – and the promise of heaven can be very comforting because our faith promises us that the suffering has a limit; that one day it will come to an end forever. Besides suffering, it's also very common to feel dissatisfaction with life – no matter how many comforts we can surround ourselves with, no matter how many ways we can distract ourselves with entertainment and leisure and travel, no matter how much good food we can eat – we still get bored and restless; we might feel a nagging, persistent sense of dissatisfaction: Is this all there is?

But despite all this, we might still feel more comfortable with this life rather than the concept of the next life – even of heaven – because we are much more familiar with this one. And, as I mentioned, we have many, many ways to distract and entertain ourselves these days, to help keep at bay the nagging feelings of dissatisfaction, let alone the thought of eternal life. We have many more ways now than in the past to reduce or mitigate suffering. And we are busier than ever before – there’s always so much to do. So the end result of all this is that we might try not to think too much about the next life: it’s too abstract and I’ve got plenty of other things to think about right now instead.

However, there’s something else to keep in mind about this new creation that we await: it has already begun. It’s not just waiting for us in heaven – but that is where it certainly will be brought to its fulfillment – Jesus has already begun the work of this new creation. He did that when He was conceived in Mary’s womb, when he began

to proclaim the Good News of salvation throughout Israel and Judea, when he began to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, cast out demons, and even raise the dead. He also did that when he gathered his 12 apostles and then the 72 other disciples to go out doing the same things he was doing, when he established his Church, when he died and rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and when he gave His Holy Spirit to his disciples. Yes, the new creation has begun, but it has not yet been brought to fulfillment. Healing the sick and restoring sight to the blind were foreshadowings of this fulfillment, when we will be healed of all the spiritual illnesses that afflict us and when our spiritual sight will be restored and we will be able to see God as He truly is.

And Jesus gives us a part to play in his new creation. Just as he sent out the 72 disciples in today's Gospel, he also sends us out to evangelize others. That's because he desires that all people be given the opportunity to be a part of this new creation. Once we get in the

door, we don't slam it shut behind us, just content that we got in, we keep going out to invite more people to enter.

Of course, that doesn't mean that everyone will accept the invitation. Jesus warns his disciples that he is sending them out like lambs among wolves. And he tells them, "Whatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, 'The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you.'" In other words, sometimes we will be rejected, and then it's time to move on – other people also need to hear the Good News of salvation. God has given all of us free will, and that includes the freedom to reject Him, His message, and His messengers. And perhaps we ourselves are not the one who will reach this or that person; but maybe someday someone else will be able to. We leave the judgment up to God, remaining hopeful that even those who reject us now will one day embrace the Truth of the faith.

When Jesus sent his disciples out to visit the towns he was intending to visit, to prepare the way for him, he was letting them participate in his saving work of bringing about a new creation. And he does the same for us. It is a very noble mission. But I would like to clarify something about the new creation: even though we can begin to experience it even now, Jesus is not calling us to try to bring about heaven on earth. He is not calling us to try to create a utopia in this life. In this fallen world we live in, it is not possible. Every time human beings have fooled themselves into believing they can bring about a perfect world here on earth, the result is disastrous: instead of creating heaven on earth, they create hell. We have only to look at the history of the 20th century for clear examples of this. No doubt the 21st century will have its own examples too. Jesus calls us to participate in *his* work of bringing about *his* new creation, not ours, a work that has already begun but will not come to fulfillment until the next life and the end of time.

I said earlier that we might feel more comfortable with this life rather than the next one because this is the one we know, and the next one might seem very abstract, maybe too abstract to get really excited about. But wouldn't it be great if God would just give us a little glimpse every now and then? Yet I think sometimes He does. Not to me, you might be thinking. However, I would suggest that, if you would like a little glimpse of the new creation, include some time in your prayer just to give praise to God. He doesn't need our praise; it doesn't benefit Him in any way, but amazingly, He desires it. Yes, He desires our praise, because He loves us and He knows that when we praise Him, it elevates us to Him – He brings us closer to Himself, to Him who is the source of all good and the sovereign Lord of all creation. As a start, I would encourage you to spend even just a minute each day by reflecting briefly on just why the Lord is worthy of all praise, honor, and glory, and then giving Him praise, honor and glory. It can be as simple as repeating: "Lord, I praise you, I honor you, I glorify you." While I can't predict what God is or isn't

going to do, I think I *can* say that when we do this, we are disposing ourselves to receive little glimpses of the new creation that awaits us.

Our praise and worship of God, however, should not be for the purpose of getting glimpses of the new creation. We should content ourselves that our praise and worship of God is a good thing in itself, whether or not we “feel” anything, or “get anything out of it.” Praising God with all our mind, heart, and soul is what He created us for and it is good in itself. Regardless of what we might experience, though, when we praise God, at least for a moment, we enter into His new creation.

- **July 6, 2025 at St. Mary's, Spring Lake**