



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

"Our mission is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ's love to our entire community through traditional Anglo-Catholic worship, fellowship, outreach, and Christian formation."

Our Vision: *"We strive to be a haven of healing, reconciliation, joy and peace in service to our wider community and beyond, so that our example in prayer and practice may reflect Christ's love for us all."*

THIS SUNDAY May 3 & BEYOND

We Shall Not Be In Want



The Fourth Sunday of Easter always brings us the image of the Good Shepherd. The Gospel readings vary from Year A to C, but both Year A and B bring us Psalm 23.

There is hardly any person in the societies who have inherited the Judeo-Christian heritage who does not know at least a small part of this psalm. Why is that so?

This psalm is the comforting one par excellence. It is read to people who are going through serious illness or great material or human losses. It is read to the dying. Countless musical versions of it have been composed in almost every language in the world. However, there is a danger that we may think of it as what it is not. It is certainly not the equivalent of a calming mantra!

I remember a time when some calming meditation tapes became very popular in Cuba, my native country. They usually depicted a lake, a brook, a river, or even the seashore, where the beautiful sounds of water and birds were combined with a calming voice that guided people to a state of total blissful peace. In the midst of so much struggle even to find the needed food to keep the family alive, these tapes may have had a role to play then and even now. Maybe not only in Cuba, but all around the world. But the question is, do such induced states of mind really help us to face our reality? Do they transform us into better images of our Creator?

Psalm 23 has images of green pastures and still waters where God makes us rest, but its intent is very different from that of the meditation tapes I have just mentioned. The writer is assuring us of God's infallible guidance and care, using a familiar image of the time: the shepherd. Notice that, as part of His guidance, God makes us rest beside still waters. He does not simply invite us to do so. It is a must. Sabbath was and is a must for the Jewish people. Rest is the starting point. We need to stop fretting about in life and rest in Him who, as the next verse says, revives our soul and then guides us through right pathways. So the resting part has a clear purpose: to renew, to revive, and to get us ready for the journey of life again, by following God's right pathways, following His guidance and being assured by His infallible care.

The writer does not tell us that we are to remain in this comfortable resting place. What comes next is not a pleasing image at all: the valley of the shadow of death! A dark image indeed! But we are not alone there. God's rod and staff guide us in such a way that we can overcome the fear of evil. Be aware that the writer is not telling us that God will prevent us from walking such dark places in our lives. He foresees our treading on them as a very real possibility. What he does assure us of is God's unfailing guidance and care during such dark stages.

Then comes another troubling image. In the Jewish tradition, sharing the table with someone implied that there was some kind of communion or concord with those persons. However, here the writer tells us about spreading a table in the presence of those who trouble us; some versions say 'in the presence of my adversaries'. Eating in the presence of our enemies? The common interpretation has been that God is showing our enemies that He is willing to give us his sustenance abundantly. That may be true. But the fact is that the act of eating in the presence of others may also be seen as a reconciling act. The anointing of the head with oil and filling the cup so that it overflowed was seen as an act of hospitality for special guests. It clearly means that God is welcoming us as His

special guest in the banquet of life. Even in the midst of conflict, even when there are those who do not wish us well.

The last verse tells us about God's goodness and mercy following us all throughout life. A common interpretation may be that everything will be smooth and great for us. But if we have read the psalm with critical eyes, this can hardly be a good interpretation. God's goodness and mercy in our lives can only produce these same fruits in our daily behavior. Dwelling in God's house clearly means doing His will, showing forth His love, mercy and reconciling intention. There is no way we can share in God's life unless we are transformed by His Spirit into His image and likeness. After all, this is the reason why Christ became human, so as to bring us back again in communion with the divine, which clearly implies being in communion with one another and with the whole of Creation. When this longed for communion takes place, no matter how dark circumstances may be, as the psalm writer points out, we shall not be in want.

Fr. Carlos E. Expósito, Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 6:1-9;7:2a, 51-60 Psalm 23 1 Peter 2;19-25 John 10:1-10

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: The Fourth Sunday of Easter

All Saints' Sunday 9am Service

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at www.allsaintschurch.org

7:00pm Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)

TUESDAY Noon Service

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at www.allsaintschurch.org

FRIDAY Christian Formation Study at noon

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at www.allsaintschurch.org

AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)

SUNDAY The Fifth Sunday of Easter

All Saints' Sunday 9am Service

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at www.allsaintschurch.org

AA Meeting

7:00p Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)