

SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



Fr. Laurence's Homily 5th Sunday of Easter, 2007

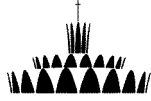
Why are we so avid for the news? Why do we need to have the paper every morning or watch the news in the evening? Could we get along without it? It might be worth asking why we're interested in the news. We need to be informed to make responsible political choices. We need to understand the problems of the world if we are to help. We need to be informed of decisions that might affect our lives, laws that are passed. Then there is mere curiosity: seeing what kinds of things happen to people. Could it be that we have an insatiable appetite for stimulation that needs to be fed? If that is so, maybe our desire for the new is really a desire for God. Our desire to know is a desire to nourish ourselves on being, and the ultimate being, the fullness of being is God.

The Gospel is good news. It's a report of events that have a significance for every human being. When it was brought to pagan towns and communities like those in the first reading it was enthusiastically welcomed. It was news about a person who had saved the world. It is the ultimate news, the only news that fully satisfies us. Why does it satisfy us? Because it recreates us, it makes us new, "Behold, I make all things new," says God at the end of Revelation; the former heaven and former earth are replaced by a new heaven and a new earth where there is no more evil or tears, where God dwells with men. The city is the new Jerusalem, because God dwells there as in the temple and there receives his people's grateful praise.

This perfect communion of God and men is the kingdom of God, an everlasting kingdom whose glorious splendors are told by the inhabitants. God has satisfied our need for newness by giving us himself as our food and our friend. You might say that Christians live in a perpetual newness, since God never gets old. There is always more to know and love in him for eternity.

Life in the new Jerusalem is governed by a new commandment, revealed by Jesus at the very moment when he was giving himself up for us. "A new commandment I give you: love one another." The Old Testament had taught "Love your neighbor as yourself," and Jesus had made that the second of his great commandments. But now he defines the specific kind of love to characterize his followers: "Love one another as I have loved you." In the moment when love impels him to lay down his life for us, he commands that we show the same love. He will go on to say that we are in him as branches in the vine, that he is in us. By eating his body and drinking his blood we become one thing with him. His life becomes ours and ours becomes his. It is that sharing in his life through the Eucharist that enables us to love as he loves. That is the ultimate good news, that men and women can live with the life of God, and that life is love.

Love is what unites the members of the kingdom of God. It will be perfected in heaven but grows on earth. The Eucharist empowers us, as the Holy Father said, to love even the person whom I do not like or even know. Let us surrender ourselves more fully to that love so that it becomes an active force in our world, which so much needs love and unity. May the life of the risen Jesus in us show itself in our effort to lay down our lives for others, our patience in bearing their burdens, our service, our gentleness and



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kindness, our willingness to sacrifice for those who are members of the same body as we are. Then all men will know that God is with us.