

## 5<sup>th</sup> Easter 2007

What's new? Is that a question you hear very often? So what's new? It's one that I hear and I have to admit it makes me a little nervous. I for one have to strain my brain to think of something "new". My first response is usually: same old, same old. But then I may come up with something to say that feels "new". Usually the question is put in a way that the hope is "what's new is good news". And maybe that's what makes me a little nervous. "What's new that is good news"

What's new? May be the question at the heart of our liturgy today. What was new for those early Jewish disciples of Jesus, like Paul and Barnabas who were energized by their travels from place to place, speaking the good news of Jesus, was that a door was opening to the Gentiles. Belief in the Good news of God in Jesus was not going to be for a single people but was going to be for all, for Jew and Gentile alike. What was so new for these early Jewish-Christians was that they had to revision the world, revision God's design, revision themselves.

What's new? What was new for the author of the book of revelations was that in the midst of persecution, suffering, struggles with the forces of evil in the world, there was a new way of seeing God's saving love in the world. Behold I saw a new heaven and a new earth. And this place was God's dwelling place. Revelations john is simply blown away by the vision that God's desire for the world would ultimately triumph. That there would be no more tears, no more brokenness, no more violence. And the vision of God' ultimate victory gave him hope for the Now. The Now was New in the vision of this "revision of heaven and earth"

What's new? What was new for the disciples gathered around Jesus "on the night he was betrayed. I give you a new commandment" Love one another. Nothing new here. At the heart of the law is the commandment to love God and neighbor. They would have known that. A new commandment? As I have loved you. John's community, living 60 years after Jesus' death and resurrection would have gotten the "new" part. As Jesus has loved, so must we love. Loving to the point of laying down one's life as he did. The very unconditional love that God was offering to the world in Jesus must be the sign of a disciples' life. Love each other as I have loved you.

What's new? Well, yesterday 50 of our 7 year olds received this unconditional love from God is Jesus for the first time in bread broken and wine poured out. (Yes, I know that 2<sup>nd</sup> graders are not thinking in abstract theological terms) So to bring it down to earth, I first asked them how their first communion was like a potluck supper. And the answer was because everybody brings something different? Every one who is invited has a special something to bring to the table. And you never know what the menu will be! And everyone gets to share at the table. But then I asked how is the Eucharist not like a potluck and one bright boy said. "When you come to church you always get the same thing" Wow! I said. You got that right. This gift of Jesus' life given in bread and wine is always the same. It's always the same love, the same gift, the same Jesus who gives himself to us in unconditional love. Whether it's your first communion or 15,000 \*which I think it is for me. The menu is the same. The food and drink are the same, whom we receive is the same. And that is very comforting. Whether you are 7, 17 or 70 the gift is the same now as it was then and ever will be. But when we come to the table, when we come to gather for community and word and sacrament, we are not the same. We are not the same because of what is happening in our lives, because of what's happening in our world. (Even if we feel like we are "same old" same old" We are from week to week a "pot-luck people". Sometimes we are broken, sometimes, bored, sometimes, angry, sometimes joyful, sometimes in love, sometimes feeling bitterly disappointed

about the way our world or our lives have turned out. **But** we come as a **potluck people** to have the enthusiasm of the Acts of the Apostles strengthen our faith. The vision of a new heaven and earth strengthen our Hope for a better world. The invitation to love as Jesus did strengthen our love and desire to go and make all things new, as Jesus did, as Jesus does, as Jesus will always do.

So what's new? If we let the power of Jesus "love one another as I have loved you" make a difference in our lives? Everything! Behold I make all things new