Easter, 4th Sunday - Cycle C  
April 21, 2013

Acts 13:14, 43-52  
Revelations 7:9, 14B-17
Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5  
John 10:27-30

LOVE EVER GIVING, LIFE NEVER ENDING

Bombs at the Boston Marathon. Shootouts with explosives hurled from a stolen getaway car. Homes, workplaces, neighborhoods, entire towns on lockdown. Wherever we turned this week, depressing reports filled the spaces around us.

And so it is that I come before you once again, after a week of tragedy in the land of the free and the brave. Many of the reactions we are feeling and sharing are starting to get way too familiar.

Some of us may be worrying or even consumed by feelings of vulnerability and insecurity. We wonder if it's safe to go out into public at all, to a sporting event, to a restaurant, to anywhere. Some of us feel helpless. Still others may channel their emotions outward to falsely condemn, assign blame, or even incite unrest.

CNN’s National Security Analyst Peter Bergen impudently suggested that Monday’s tragedy may have been the work of American conservatives. In an interview on MSNBC, former U.S. Rep. Barney Frank implied that if those darn Republicans hadn’t of gotten in the way, more federal funds might have available for security in Boston. One of the Boston bombers is believed to have sent chilling messages via Twitter after his attack.

You see far too many people misguidedly think they are in control or have all the answers. And yes, there are those who think they have power, and ever more sadly even those who hide behind the power of a bomb.

But the power exuded by the testimony of an expert on TV or Facebook posting or even the Boston bombs in no way compares to the power of our God.

Only God holds true power… and that power is absolute love. God, the creator of heaven and of earth, of all that is visible and invisible, who in His love for us brought us a savior. A savior who takes away all our sins, not because of some law that was passed, but by his death on a cross. A savior who, through his resurrection, fills us with an abundance of gifts of the Holy Spirit for our justification (Rom 4:25).
Our celebrations of the Easter season reminds us of the singular importance of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. **LOVE EVER GIVING, LIFE NEVER ENDING.** This is the message we should be talking about on TV, tweeting with friends, and posting on Facebook.

**LOVE EVER GIVING, LIFE NEVER ENDING.** At the very moment of our conception, we become a new creation **in** God of intimately intertwined body and immortal soul that begins a never-ending journey **with** God. For when we die our physical death, God separates what he has joined and our immortal soul remains.

Our Easter season reminds us that Christ Jesus will always be with us, just as the Father was with Him as He made his perilous passage. In some ways I can’t wait until my soul “sees” Jesus face to face.

Until that time, let’s all not be troubled or overwhelmed by feelings of fear, vulnerability, loss of social order, even death. **These feelings have no power over us...** **God is in control.** And He has given us a shepherd to protect us on our journey. We need look no further than to Pope Francis, and today’s Gospel from John and the other New Testament readings, for inspiration to place **absolute trust** in Jesus our shepherd.

So with this in mind, let’s take a look then at Paul and Barnabas’ journey. Earlier we heard of their encounters with violent uprising, treachery, and conspiracy. But we also heard that this evil had no effect. For by the power of the Holy Spirit the Israelites became believers and Paul and Barnabas became “filled with joy.”

Now let’s turn to our 2nd reading from the book of Revelation. Our reading from chapter 7 picks up after terrifying visions from the pages before it: visions of earthquake; blackening of the sun and falling of the stars; disappearance of sky, mountain, and island; multitudes fleeing...

In other words, our 2nd reading today begins with the question on many people’s minds today: Is salvation even possible after witnessing all these most horrifying events?

The answer is absolutely yes!

Revelation tells us of an amazing diversity of people – people “from every nation, race, people, and tongue” robed in white and the palm branches of victory in hand – all joined in unity unceasingly praising God.

You see the shepherd watched over them just as He promised. Jesus let no one or no terrifying event take them out of his hand. Jesus found and brought home the one lost sheep. And at his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus took care that no harm
would befall the apostles. He tells the Sanhedrin “If you are looking for me, let these men go” (John 18:8). Once again, nothing happens to the disciples.

Jesus’ hand in protecting the sheep is no less than our Father’s hand protecting us on our everlasting journey with Him. Jesus tells us today “The Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

We will survive these times of great distress. And once we wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb, we will not hunger or thirst anymore.

**LOVE ever giving, life never ending, God wipes away every tear from our eyes.**

Let us come before Him at this table and at every moment of our lives shouting for joy and singing to the glory of the Lord!

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