

Fourth Sunday of Easter – May 12, 2019

Acts: 13: 14, 43-52 Revelation 7: 9, 14-17 John 10: 27-30

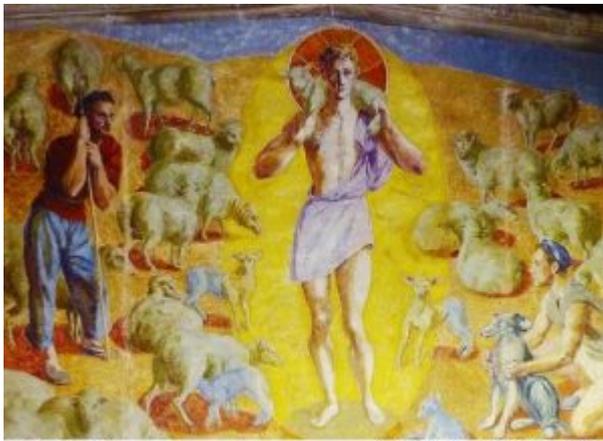
I have found many of the messages that we hear from Scripture during the Easter Season to be somewhat troubling because they appear to contrast so much with what is experienced or evident in our world today. One of the things that is apparent to me is a significant fear of what is different. Such differences include a person's place of origin or color of skin, or form of worship, among other things. Such fear, expressed in various ways, is contrary to what we believe. Such fear calls into question or suspicion so many persons and things. Yet everything around us, all persons with whom we share the gifts of life, are part of and reflections of God's creation.

What we celebrate at Easter is the deep assurance, the deep conviction, the deep confidence, that comes from being a part of the magnificent plan of our loving God that gives life, that give hope, that embraces all of creation.

What our God tells us through the Scriptures that we have heard today is that if we firmly believe that we are part of the eternal life that Christ has won for us through his resurrection, then our attitude toward life is to be one of confidence and not fear. We are to have faith on other human beings as creatures of God rather than immediately questioning them or doubting them. We are to look at the world, both large and small, not with skepticism and doubt, but with hope and with trust gained through faith in the Risen Lord. Cynicism

and negativity simply do not have a place alongside genuine faith.

When Paul and Barnabas were rejected by their own people who plotted against them, they confidently and fearlessly turned to the willing ears of the non-Jews. This was a radical step in the life of the early Church, but they were confident in their action and in their faith. They were rewarded for this by the response of so many.



Duncan Grant
St. Blaise Chapel of St. Mary's Cathedral

Christ as the Good Shepherd
Lincolnshire, Great Britain

The vision of John as he was addressing the ones who had survived persecution, tells those who have been through trials and distress, who have suffered persecution for their faith, that they can be confident and without fear because they will come to a point where there will be no

thirst or hunger, no weeping or tears.

Our greatest confidence, our greatest reason to be without fear, comes from the words of Jesus as he describes himself as the Good Shepherd. He knows his own. He knows us and will care for his own. No one will take them out of his hand, no one will destroy them. They will, indeed, have eternal, unending life.

The Resurrection of the Lord that we celebrate during this Easter Season is the basis, the reason, that we who profess

faith have no cause to fear. Jesus repeatedly tells us: "Do not be afraid." We may well describe a variety of persons and situations which cause fear, but doing so is really a challenge to us. It is a challenge to rise above the prejudices of a limited and selfish vision. It is a challenge to us to examine the depth and degree of our genuine faith and trust in our good and gracious God.