**THEME:** NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH, NEW COMMANDMENT

**READINGS:** Acts 14:21-27/ Rev. 21:1-5/ John 13:31-35

5th Sunday of Easter

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The Bible begins with the story of the creation of the heavens and the earth by God (Gen. 1:2) and it ends in the Book of Revelation with the message of the re-creation of heaven and earth by God: John said he ‘***saw a new heaven and a new earth’*** (Rev. 21:1; second reading).

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth through His Word (John 1:1-3); and at the appointed time, He ***re-creates*** heaven and earth through the same Word-made-flesh (John 1:14). By His incarnation, death and resurrection the Word of God, Jesus Christ, recreates heaven and earth: He, who is the First and the Last, who died but now lives forever (Rev. 1:8, 17-18) says, ‘behold, I make all things ***new***’ (Rev. 21:5).

By taking on human flesh, Jesus Christ has given a ***new*** value to our human nature; by dying He has re-cycled our sin and death (the consequence of sin); and by rising He produced a ***new product***: ***eternal life*** – we shall live forever in heaven (death is no longer our end).

NEW HEAVEN

The ***new*** heaven does not mean that the nature of heaven has been recreated; rather it means that the composition of the citizenship of heaven has been changed; for now mere mortals (men, women, children) are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), where only God and His angels used to live: ‘I looked, and there before me was a ***great multitude*** that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”’(Rev. 7:9-10). ***Imagine! you and I are being invited to join the great multitude that changes the composition of heaven! Can you imagine that we are part of the process of making heaven new?***

Secondly, we enter heaven, not with our mortal bodies, but with a resurrected and glorious body: a ***new*** body which the present physical body cannot be compared with in any way (1 Cor. 15:35-44). Simply put, the ***new product*** is simply beyond our imagination!

NEW EARTH

The natures of land, mountains, seas, the physical human person, etc. have not changed since the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So the ***new*** earth that John spoke about is not about the recreation of the physical earth and its inhabitants into a more beautiful physical earth. Rather, it is about the recreation of the ***minds, hearts and souls of people who live on this earth.***

Illustration: if physically human beings are largely responsible for changing the surface of the earth through our labour, science and technology (ICT), then spiritually it is God who recreates the earth by changing the minds, hearts and souls of men, women and children.

Thus, since the incarnation-death-resurrection of Jesus Christ, when God looks on this earth, He sees (despite the evils) a ***new creation***: many more ***human souls full of faith in God, human hearts full of love for God, human minds seeking greater knowledge of God***. And all this, in the sure hope of enjoying the ***new product*** (everlasting life in heaven) and in appreciation of the God who so loved the world that He gave us His only Son so that whosoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

NEW COMMANDMENT

If God has so much loved us – offering us a ***new earth*** and ***new heaven*** at the cost of the most precious life of His only Son – then we need to respond with love like His. In other words, the ***citizens of a new earth and a new heaven operate with a new commandment.*** Thus, the Lord commands us: ***‘Love one another as I have loved you’*** (John 13:34; gospel reading). Finally, then, beloved, may the ineffable love of God for us be the motivation and measure for our love for others. Amen!