

**Catholic Church of the Beatitudes
Santa Barbara, CA**

Homily for the Beatitudes Community, July 11, 2020
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
Reflecting on Isaiah 55:6-13; Psalm/Isaiah 43:1-3a,4-7,1d;
Romans 8:19-25; Matthew 12:22-37

We will pass through the waters of birth into a new creation.

Mary Becker

Most often in a homily, an effort is made to comment on all the readings of the day, with a special emphasis on the Gospel. At least, that's my understanding. However, today I take major inspiration from the text of the Second Reading, St. Paul's letter to the Romans—and also the reading from Isaiah, Chapter 43, that is in place of the Psalm.

Another of my inspirations has been our daily news over the past month. In fact, the daily news dovetails with a passage from today's gospel, where Jesus says:

Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste. No town or house divided against itself will stand.

When we look at the United States of America today, we see a whole nation that is divided against itself. It's sad, it's tragic. If we keep on like this, will our country stand? Or will it be laid waste?

What are we to do? What guidance is there for how we are to hold things together? How can we unite the divisions in our towns and cities and states—in our country?

Well, let us turn to St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. I don't know precisely what was happening in Rome at the time that Paul wrote this letter. But there must have been a lot of turmoil and chaos and uncertainty. This is what Paul wrote:

The whole, holy creation waits in eager longing for the next thing to come. All around us we observe a pregnant creation. Creation is becoming. It was made that way—it was made to be a process. We

are on a journey, destined to be brought into the freedom at the heart of God.

The pain throughout the world—the pain throughout **our** world—is the groaning of birth pangs. And it's not only in the creation **around** us. The pain of birth pangs is **within** us. We ourselves groan inwardly.

It is the Spirit of God stirring within us, awakening us to unseen possibilities. It is hope that delivers us and sets us free.

Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what they already have?

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we persevere with patience.

I invite you now to take a minute of silence to think about what you truly long for.

- What do you sincerely hope will come to be out of this chaotic time? (Pause)
- What does your heart desire to see born at this pregnant time of turmoil and uncertainty? (Pause)

When you are willing to share your longing, your heart's desire, please raise your hand. (Pause for sharing)

Thank you all.

You've heard the saying from Proverbs: "Without a **vision**, the people perish."

Today we have imagined and given voice to a vision. A vision that will help to birth us and our descendents into new life, into a new creation.

So let us resolve to pray and work for all those things to happen. And when they happen, may our country become a fair, strong, just and peaceful home for all its people. When those things come to be, our country will truly

become, for the first time, the **United** States of America.

It is daunting to undertake the building of this vision. It will require courage and creativity. But we are Christians—and we know that it is not just up to us to bring our vision into being.

We have the great help, care and love of our God, who speaks to us in the words of Isaiah:

Do not fear, for I have freed you. I have called you by name. You are Mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

When you pass through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you.

When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am your God, the Holy One, the One Who makes you whole.

You are precious in My sight and I love you.

Do not fear, for I am with you.

I will gather unto Myself all children from New York,

and those from California I will hold in My arms.

I will say to those from Minnesota, 'Find your home in Me,'

and to those in Georgia, 'Do not hold back,'

For I love you and you are Mine.

We will pass through the waters.

We will pass through the waters,

We will pass through the waters of birth into a new creation.

Amen. Let it be so.