

PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER YEAR C

Second Reading **Apocalypse 21: 1–5**

The Greek word *Apokalypsus* means 'Revelations' and so this last book of the Bible is variously known by one term or the other.

It is very different from the other books of the New Testament in that it tells of visions concerning events and words not normally seen or heard by human beings about heaven and earth in the past, present and future.

Its authorship is disputed. Very early on it has been associated with John, the writer of the fourth gospel but there is no certainty about this. Its date would seem to be around 95 AD.

The language and imagery are striking and often difficult to understand for contemporary minds who do not always perceive their symbolism.

Today's passage comes towards the end of the book. The author describes a vision, not to alarm or impress us but to help us realise what God is doing and why we are here.

Apocalyptic literature reveals rather than predicts. It is not a view of the future but what is now.

People are not promised heaven as an escape or a reward, rather they are called to be God's partners in a world which does not replace the one they live in but is completely renewed.

The new Jerusalem is a place where humans have overcome their divisions and live together as one and with God come down from heaven, living among them, looking after them, consoling them in their sadness.

Evil is permanently conquered. The image used here is that of the sea disappearing. Ancient people had long associated the sea with fearful, evil creatures. Sea monsters, such as Leviathan symbolised death and pain (see Psalm 74: 13–14 or Isaiah 27: 1) Eradicating them brings about peace and harmony.

Contemporary Christians, praying this passage during Eastertide will perhaps see in the Risen Christ the one making the whole of creation new.



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IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM

Gospel John 13: 31–35

'Love one another as I have loved you'

Chapter 13: 31 to Chapter 17 in John's Gospel are known as 'The Farewell Discourse(s)', where Jesus speaks to his disciples before his death and resurrection. This Sunday's passage comes after Judas leaves the group to betray Jesus and just before Jesus foretells Peter's denials.

Now has the Son of Man been glorified ...

This is a complex sentence using both the past and the future tense. It has challenged many scholars. The 'glorification process' for Jesus – that is, being publicly honoured and acclaimed, revealing the very essence of a person – involves rejection, crucifixion, death and resurrection.

'Now' refers to Judas's departure to betray Jesus: the scene is set, wheels are in motion, the rest will follow. This is how being glorified can be both in the past (betrayal) and in the future (death and resurrection).

My little children

Although it is the only time Jesus calls his disciples 'children' in John's Gospel, the evangelist uses this term several times in his letters.

A new commandment

The injunction to love one another is not, in itself, new. It can be found in the Old Testament: 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Leviticus 19: 18). But what is new here is the command to the disciples to '*love one another just as I have loved you.*' Jesus is the model, the reason, the cause for loving one another.

It should be noted that the term 'love', as well as meaning simply 'liking' someone, also implies – at the very least – attachment, commitment, and loyalty. It also means showing compassion and helping those in need.

'By this love everyone will know you are my disciples'

This is the main purpose of this love between the disciples. It mirrors the love of Jesus for all people. It is a sign of 'being Church'.

