

Homily for Monday in the Fourth Week of Lent

March 23, 2020

The Holy Eucharist

By the Reverend Stephen Gerth

*Isaiah 65:17–25; Psalm 30:1–6\*; John 4:43–54*

I have never had the privilege of doing a careful study of the Book of Isaiah or of the Revelation to John. I hear the familiar, beautiful words of today's lesson from the last section of Isaiah, chapters 56 to the end, and think not of the restored Jerusalem after the exile but of the visions and emotions of heaven that we read in Revelation:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven . . . And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God . . . I heard a loud voice from the throne . . .  
“Behold, the dwelling of God is with men and women<sup>1</sup> . . . God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 21:3. I translate *ἀνθρώπων* as men and women to reflect its meaning in Greek.

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 21:1–4.

Yesterday afternoon the sun was shining, and I decided to take a walk to exercise—2:15 or so in the afternoon. As I walked west on 47th Street, I noticed that there was a small police presence in Times Square. I thought I would walk two miles south on 9th Avenue and come back on 7th. But I didn't get very far. A few people walking together seemed to be couples; almost everyone else seemed mindful social distance. But there were too many people, some clearly homeless, who seemed to have nowhere to go. The only group I passed was of some older men who were drinking too much. I didn't feel safe. I turned left when I got to 42nd Street and walked home to 47th Street through Times Square.

Last night, Father Jay Smith officiated at Evening Prayer. Before we prayed together the General Thanksgiving, he invited our intercessions silently or aloud. I remembered too late to ask aloud that we pray for the safety of the city—a prayer we made daily in the years following September 11, 2001.

Our concerns are different now, but the safety of our city is of great importance. My own prayer intention at this Eucharist will be for our city. May the Divine

Assistance remain with us always and with those who are absent from us.

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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