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Text: John 14:25-27

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Easter 6

DARE TO DREAM

Visions abound in the Bible readings for today. In the reading from Acts, Paul has a vision about what to do. In the reading from Revelation, John has a vision of what will be. In today's Gospel reading, the risen Lord Jesus provides visions of peace and empowerment. And so today I want to talk about vision, about seeing the bigger picture, about having hopes and dreams.

What mother doesn't have hopes and dreams for her children! She holds her child in her arms and sees all kinds of possibilities. "She will be president some day," she thinks. "He will be a great musician." A father, too, has hopes and dreams for his children. It is what parents do.

It is not just parents, though, who have hopes and dreams. We all do. We have hopes and dreams for our own lives, for our families, for our church, for our community. I can hear it in a grandmother's voice as she talks about her grandchildren. I see it in the eyes of the young couple who come to be married. I hear it in conversations at church functions. I read about it in letters to the editor in the daily newspaper.

This is good. We need hopes and dreams. We need to see beyond the present, beyond the turmoil of the world around us. We need a vision of something better. In fact, the Bible says, "Without a vision the people perish." (Prov. 29:18)

So dream on! Dare to envision something better - for your family, your friends, your church, your community.

Even the world. Friday morning I listened to a young man talk about his dream of a better world. He went to Africa, lived among people infected with HIV/AIDS, spent time visiting orphanages and prisons. He saw the hurt, he listened to the people's stories, and now he is doing something about it. He has a vision of something better and he working to make it happen. "I have a dream," said Martin Luther King, Jr. "And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." Dr. King's dream was powerful and it is changing a nation.

The Apostle John had a dream. He was given a vision of the Lord God dwelling among people, a vision of healing and wholeness and peace. And that vision has helped countless people down through the ages to look beyond the difficulties of the moment to see a brighter future. In fact, Christians in John's day were being persecuted. They were under great pressure to give up their faith. John's vision gave them courage and hope for the future.

Do you have a vision that is giving you courage and hope for the future? Are you dreaming big dreams and hoping great hopes?

Unfortunately, when it comes to life, we can get very shortsighted. We look at our problems. We dwell on our needs. We feel the pain. And the temptation is huge to only look at the difficulties. And when we do, it can get us down and we get worried and fearful. We need to see the bigger picture.

Like Peter when he got out of the boat and started walking on the water. He was fine until he looked at the waves and felt the wind and began to think of the danger he was in - and then he began to sink. As

long as he kept his eyes on Jesus he was fine. When he took his eyes off Jesus, and focused on the danger, he began to sink.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled,” says Jesus in today’s Bible reading, “and do not let them be afraid.” Jesus invites you to look at him. To see him on the cross. To see the empty tomb. And then to see the bigger picture, the picture of God at work in the world. That’s what Jesus wants you to see.

And that’s why Jesus has given you the Holy Spirit. In the reading today, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit an “Advocate.” The Greek word for “advocate” is paraclete, which comes from a verb that means “to call alongside.” A paraclete is the one you call to be by your side when you are hauled into court on false charges. A paraclete is the one you call to be by your side when the school bully is threatening to beat up on you. A paraclete is the one you call to be by your side when you need to see the bigger picture.

When it comes to life, there is more than meets the eye. There is more than life-threatening illnesses, more than bad news from Wall Street, more than poverty and injustice. There is God! You have been given the Holy Spirit so that you may see that God loves so very much that Jesus came and suffered and died for you. You have been given the Holy Spirit so that you may see that God has great dreams for you and will give you a future with hope.

So catch the vision. Moms and grandmothers - dare to dream big dreams for your family. All of you, dare to dream big dreams - for yourself, the church, the community. Dare to envision something better. Open your eyes of faith, catch the vision. See God at work!