

Scriptures: SUNDAY MAY 5, 2019

SERMON: **WELCOME TO THE MANOR** THE REV. DR. JOHN JOSEPH MASTANDREA

SCRIPTURES: Acts 9:1-6(7-20); Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER , MANOR ROAD UNITED

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**In this morning we proclaim.**

**“We are the instruments of welcome”**

Today we hear the words, “We are the Light flashed from heaven!”

When I first told a friend that I had accepted a call to Manor Road United, he told me about the BBC series. **To the Manor Born** a sitcom that first aired on 1979, starring Penelope Keith and Peter Bowles,

The title is a play on the phrase "to the manner born,"

from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* ("Though I am a native here and to the manner

born". The manor is the place of gathering; Edward Thomas writes in his poem.

**The Manor**

*THE rock-like mud unfroze a little, and rills  
Ran and sparkled down each side of the road  
Under the catkins wagging in the hedge.*

Today in the Manor we hear from the writers of the book of Acts “Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him”

This is the famous Damascus Road story, it is the transforming personal encounter that changed the course of Saul's life.

“Suddenly a light from heaven flashed from heaven”

Saul's identity was created as Paul. His life went from the terror filled humdrum to meeting the mystery of life as a whole person.

“Suddenly a light from heaven flashed from heaven.”

Suddenly people came as they had been flocking up to Jesus the way they always seemed to when word got around that he was in the neighborhood.

“Suddenly a light from heaven flashed from heaven.”

Paul remembered the light that flashed from, we remember the light that flashed from heaven. When a family dies when a new road opens in our lives.

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Frederich Buechner writes this reflection on the word *Remember*:  
*When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you; that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are.*

Paul remembers the words spoken by the people from Acts.

“Go for he is an instrument.” Paul was an instrument who was chosen to bring Christ’s name.

“Go for he is an instrument”

In the famous Damascus Road story is read as a personal encounter that changed the course of Saul’s life. The event described a prototypical conversion experience, that begins:

“Go for he is an instrument”

Theologian Bernard Lonergan describes conversion as something that is ongoing at each milestone of our lives with Spiritual, Intellectual and Psychological bridges being crossed at each episode.

“Go, for he is an instrument”.

Today in the Text and then Consider ourselves.

**“We are the instruments of welcome”**

For Paul “I sing the songs of the world’ dashing and whirling, swishing and swirling. I sing the songs of the world, the passionate songs of the world.” Today we hear the songs of the world and voice of angels.

The writers of Revelation remembered the words of Paul on that road to Damascus. “I looked and heard the voice of many angels”

Revelation is the only full representative of the apocalyptic genre in the New Testament. A rich symbolic text with a complex narrative structure, confronting our worlds of common sense in its attempt to reveal hidden realities that include the vulnerability of sin and the power of God’s grace.

“I looked and heard the voice of many angels”

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Frederick Buechner reminds us that, "God's weakness is stronger than human strength." Throughout Revelation this insight energizes a consistent and thoroughgoing criticism of two interconnected human projects that John experienced:

"I looked and heard the voice of many angels"

We look to remember the socioeconomic world constructed by the ideology of Roman imperial might and the idolatrous public worship that legitimated this regime in the imperial cult. The revelation of God on the cross—of Christ *crucified*—turns upside down the usual ideas of what constitutes power as well as sacrifice.

Their world was turned upside, while our world is transformed in the greening of the earth as we witness the quiet corners all around us.

In this poem "Hummingbird" we are reminded of the delicate beauty of the Humming bird in God's creation.

*Arriving with throats like nipped roses, like a tiny  
bloom fastened to each neck, nothing else  
cuts the air quite like this thrum to make the small  
dog at my feet whine and yelp. So we wait—no  
excitement pinned to the sky so needled and our days open  
full of rain for weeks. Nothing yet from the ground speaks  
green except weeds. But soon you see a familiar shadow  
hovering where the glass feeders you brought  
inside used to hang because the ice might shatter the pollen  
junk and leaf bits collected after this windiest, wildest of winters.*

As the Hummingbirds welcome us,

We are the instruments of welcome.

Today's gospel from the writers of John's community, welcomes us to listen.

Jesus says "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."

Our story opens with the disciples gathered together, presumably before nightfall, on the shore by the Sea of Tiberias. Peter says to the others in "I am going fishing," and they respond, "We will go with you."

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*"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."*

The disciples caught nothing "all through the night," opens with Jesus on the beach "just after daybreak."

*"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."*

He knows they have caught nothing, and when the disciples confirm this, he urges them to "cast the net to the right side of the boat."

The disciples' nets begin to tear from the great weight of the fish now caught, the Beloved Disciple is the first to recognize Jesus in the wondrous event that has just occurred: "It is the Lord!"

*"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."*

Directly in response to hearing those words Simon Peter "put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea."

*"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."*

we—need to set aside our claims of priority and work together in patience, forgiveness, and devotion to the Christ.

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea."

*"Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some."*

WHEN WE ARE NAKED, WHEN WE ARE VULNERABLE, WHEN WE RISK OURSELVES

When we cast the net to the right side of the boat, God finds us. At first glance it seems madness and yet when risk we discover God's love casting out to us.

In the words of the poet Jayy Dodd

"I have a new madness"

*"need madness is always a hunger that I am even able to eat is its own feat i have learned to swallow charitably cede my mouth to the gristle cede my tongue to cartilage a former fixation on writhing now what is left? In my adulthood, navigating the cost of living and being outside, I am compelled to think more critically about the matter of which I am made." The new madness for Peter is as he declares "I am going fishing". Peter the disciples are bad fishers and yet they persevere. Jesus say "Lose your life to find your life"*

J.Michael Martinez reminds us change in his poem "the death to paint us"

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“there is always one more death to paint us an ochre without axle aiming us like a sunflower down a path a harp once followed”

Paint itself in its primary colours red, yellow and blue are two dimensional, when they are blended and textured on the artists palette they become three dimensional. Our life with Christ becomes three dimensional as we lose are life to find life.

In text from Revelation we hear these words of life.

*“Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing”*

Every creature is called to bring their voice and praise. This reminds me of the Red Riding Hood story. In that story the wolf is the villain, in the story the wolf lies down with the lamb.

We are the instruments of welcome in the world and our lives.

In the texts today.

*Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him*

*Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name*

*I looked and heard the voice of many angels*

*Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”*

*Feed my lends, mend my sheep, bless my sheep, heal the world*

John Chrysostom writes in his *Homilies on the Gospel of John*:

When they recognized him, the disciples Peter and John again exhibited their different temperaments. The one was fervent, the other more contemplative. The one was ready to go, the other more penetrating. John is the one who first recognized Jesus, but Peter is the first to come to him.

We are the instruments when we hear again,

“WE ARE THE LIGHT FLASHED FROM HEAVEN”

When we are called, we become yoked to the living God.

We hear the text , *“Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him”*

*The sound of the text has ears to listen to invite us to hear again today.*

*Today's sermon, “WELCOME TO THE MANOR”*

It is the call to be the instruments of welcome.

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A few months ago when I first met our Director of Music Tom Marcaccini, he asked “when is your first Sunday?” I replied “May 5” Tom responded “that is Cinco de Mayo” We both agreed lets weave that into the day of celebration.

**Cinco de Mayo**, or the fifth of May, is a holiday that celebrates the date of the Mexican army's 1862 victory over France at the Battle of Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War.

An infamous Mexican woman Frida Kahlo de Rivera once said

“Feet, what do I need you for when I have wings to fly?”

Mexico is a great place of colour an instrument of welcome.

My first visit many years to Puerto Vallarta, La Jolla Mismaloya, Mexico was remarkable except for a small bump in the road. I was swimming one day in the Pacific Ocean, came back to shore keep in mind I was the colour of chocolate pudding. The Security guard would not let me back into the resort. He thought I was a local, he wanted me to show identification, which I did not have with only my bathing suit in hand. Thinking quickly I grabbed one of my blond blue eyed friends took her arm and walked right past him. Late I spoke with the security guard, we laughed about the misunderstanding. At the time the episode reminded me that there are times we block the moment

God breaks into help us to be instruments of welcome for ourselves, each other and the world.

Just like Saul, his eyes were open, our eyes our open to be living welcome and hospitality.

In the beginning was welcome, in the text today Jesus says “*Come have breakfast*”

**I recall a story of welcome that I heard about on the CBC** A small Ontario town welcomed this Egyptian new Canadian Michael Haddad. Filled with gratitude in the moment, now he’s buying its church — to save it.

In the moment for Paul “Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him” We Go, for we are an instrument whom God has chosen to bring the sacred name.

We look and hear the voice of many angels

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We Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and we find some."

We are called to hear the words of Christ "*Feed my lambs , mend my sheep, bless my sheep, heal the world*"

*This week I heard the call of Christ to write this poem*

### MOURNING INTO DANCING

We are an instrument

To heal, to restore, we heal, we restore

We are an instrument

Paul was breathing threats, we are threats

We are an instrument

To people who belong to the Way, we are walking the way.

We are an instrument

Paul approached Damascus, we approach this day

We are an instrument

Suddenly a heavenly light flashed, we are blinded

We are an instrument

Blind Paul fell to the ground, we fall to the ground

We are an instrument

"why do you persecute?" we persecute ourselves

We are an instrument

Get up and enter the city, we enter the world

We are an instrument

The men stood speechless, we stand in silence

We are an instrument

Saul could see nothing, we hide our eyes

"Here I am, Lord." Here we are

We are an instrument

At this moment he is praying, in this instant we are praying

We are an instrument

Lay hands on him, we are the hands

We are an instrument

that he regain his sight, we see once more

We are an instrument

Go, for he is an instrument , we are an instrument

chosen to bring my name, we bring God's name

We are an instrument

scales fell from Paul's eyes, scales fall from our eyes

We are an instrument

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and his sight was restored, we see again  
We are an instrument  
immediately Paul proclaimed Jesus , We proclaim Jesus now!  
We are an instrument  
saying, "He is the Son of God." We are the children of God"

*We are the Light flashed from heaven*

*A light flashed from heaven for Archbishop Desmond Tutu*

In *God Has a Dream*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes:

I have a dream, God says. Please help Me to realize it. It is a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty, its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness, its alienation and disharmony are changed into their glorious counterparts, when there will be more laughter, joy, and peace, where there will be justice and goodness and compassion and love and caring and sharing. I have a dream that swords will be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, that My children will know that they are members of one family, the human family, God's family, My family.

**Today "We are the instruments of welcome" called by the Living Christ**