

November 18, 2019
Thirty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

July 3, 2002, I was in a car accident while traveling in the Colorado Rockies with two seminary classmates of mine. It had not rained for three months and as we were driving down after a beautiful hike, the rains came down in torrents. Out of nowhere it seemed, car spun out of control and hit us. I had enough time to yell to my friend who was driving, "John, look out!" and it was done. All three of us injured, my friend, Bill and I were injured seriously enough to be hospitalized, and the woman who hit us was killed. Soon I was on my way to a hospital. The doctors treated my friend, Bill first because he had a compound fracture in his femur and needed surgery. The hospital was not fully staffed because many had left for the 4th of July holiday. I was alone on a bed in the emergency room for three hours with nowhere to look but up and to think about how this accident could have been the end my life. I realized that all too often I had given too much attention to things that are passing instead of what is lasting. I began to see things in a new way.

This weekend we hear from what is often called, the "apocalyptic literature" of the Bible. The word apocalypse means to "unveil" or to "remove the veil". Just like when I was alone in the emergency room in Denver, I was able to see more clearly, what is truly important in life, so too does the apocalyptic literature "unveils" what was previously hidden so that we can what is truly important. Apocalyptic literature shows up in parts of books like the prophet Daniel, as we heard in the first reading today, in sections of the Gospels, like we heard in 13th chapter of Mark's gospel today. The entire book of Revelation is consider to be apocalyptic literature and in fact, in Spanish the book of Revelation is *Apocalipsis*.

Bishop Mueggenborg makes a helpful observation in his book, *Come Follow Me*, which is a book of reflections on the Sunday readings. He points out that the word apocalypse is *singular, not plural*. In other words, there is *one* revelation or unveiling, not *numerous* revelations. The *one* revelation is that Jesus Christ is victorious over sin and death and now reign over heaven and earth. If a person reads apocalyptic literature in the Bible a numerous revelations, then people interpret the readings in wild ways about the events of the day or predictions of the future. However, if understand that the message is about Jesus and his victory over suffering, sin and death, then we won't fall so easily into that kind of extreme response.

Some years ago, Stephen Covey's book, "Seven Habit of Highly Effective People" was very popular. The second of the seven habits is to "Begin with end in mind." Apocalyptic Literature in the Bible helps us to be highly effective Christians, to begin each day of our lives with the end in mind, and in the end, everything on this earth will pass away, Jesus victory over sin and death will be complete, in the end God wants for us to live complete union with him. If we forget to keep the end in mind, we will too easily fall into focusing on things that don't matter, things that are passing.