

1. A city, gleaming like a jewel, glowing and radiant;
2. A city, verdant with parks and lush with life
3. A city, full of beauty and peace
 - a. The New Jerusalem according to St. John in today's second reading?
 - b. No - New York, according to Mayor Bloomberg in his recently unveiled PlaNYC,
 - i. Which calls for the five boroughs of New York to be filled with greenery.
4. Central to his plan for Manhattan
 - a. is turning a deserted strip of elevated train track called the *High Line* into a park.
 - i. Originally it was supposed to become an island of peace
 - (1) floating above the west side for some 20 blocks.
 - ii. But this being New York, as soon as work on the park began,
 - (1) so did the developers.
 - iii. and thus by the time the park is completed in 2009,
 - (1) many believe the High Line will not be the name of a park,
 - (2) but of a whole new neighborhood
 - (a) filled with luxury condominiums and businesses
 - (b) and bustling with women walking around in mink coats.
 - (3) And that in a neighborhood where 20 years ago,
 - (4) the women walking around in mink coats were usually men!
5. This story could be a parable for how difficult it is for us to find peace in our city our nation and our world.
 - a. However, we do not have to look at parks in New York to see how far the New Jerusalem is from becoming reality.
 - i. Cities not far from the Old Jerusalem tear themselves apart daily with suicide bombers and acts of terrorism
 - ii. Whole nations in Africa are dying from starvation, disease and neglect
 - iii. The aging populations of Europe are terrified of the growing pressure of the younger Muslims in their midst
 - iv. And our own nation, shell shocked by terrorism and war builds walls to keep people out, and thus nourishes the prejudice of those who are in.
 - b. Oh our leaders have always talked about peace;
 - i. But all they seem to have produced was a temporary absence of war.
 - ii. And nowadays they can't even do that.
6. The fear that we feel in this age of terrorism and war might seem new to us as Americans
 - a. But it is not;
7. When Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem in today's first reading;
 - a. They may have been going up to complain that members of the Jerusalem Church were causing problems in their church in Antioch,
 - b. By insisting that the non Jewish members of their church had to be circumcised.

- c. But in reality they were going up because they were afraid that the fights between the Jewish and gentile Christians would tear their community apart.
- 8. When the disciples were gathered together with Jesus on the night before he died
 - a. They may have eating in preparation for the Passover.
 - b. But in reality they were frightened in the face of Jesus' impending death.
- 9. When we build walls, write laws, eject immigrants and wage wars,
 - a. We might believe we are defending the peace,
 - b. But in reality all we are doing is yearning for some answer to the fear we feel.
- 10. Now the leaders of the Jerusalem Church could have responded
 - a. that circumcision and the Law which demanded it were like a wall;
 - i. Because they kept out all those who were not like them;
 - b. defend the wall and you defend the peace.
- 11. And Jesus could have responded to his disciples
 - a. that the only way to find peace was through war;
 - b. defend him from the Romans and they would be defending the peace.
- 12. But the Jerusalem leaders didn't respond that way; and neither did Jesus.
 - a. The leaders of the church surrendered! And allowed the church in Antioch to go its own way, whatever their practice was in Jerusalem
 - b. And Jesus was insistent that the only way his followers could find peace was to surrender! And allow him to go to his death, whatever they wanted in their hearts.
- 13. Father you must be thinking; what are you saying? Surrender to the terrorists? Surrender to the enemy?
 - a. No - the leaders in Jerusalem did not surrender to Paul and Barnabas; and Jesus disciples did not surrender to the Romans.
 - i. They surrendered to God.
 - b. The leaders in Jerusalem realized that in the gentiles' faith in Jesus,
 - c. And the disciples were being asked to realize that in Jesus' death
 - i. God was at work.
 - (1) Not so much in the events themselves; because people are free to choose what they will.
 - (2) but at work in them, opening their hearts and minds to see that even in the midst of suffering and war they can have peace when they realize that while they might not be in control
 - (3) God is.
 - (a) and so they should stop fighting accept the world for what it truly is; rather than what they want to believe it is,
 - (b) And in so doing change themselves; and thus change their world.
 - ii. It was the surrender of the disciples that enabled Jesus to complete his

- saving work;
- iii. It was the surrender of the leaders in Jerusalem that transformed a group within Judaism into the Church.
- d. Imagine what would happen
 - i. If as individuals we were to let go of our fear and see life for what it truly is
 - ii. If as Americans we were to let go of our fear and see the world the way it truly is
 - iii. If as Catholics we were to let go of our fear and see our Church for what it truly is
 - (1) absolutely NOT under our control; but absolutely under God's.
 - (2) I do not know if the world would change;
 - (a) But we certainly would; for we would no longer fear our loss of control. we would become
 - (i) more accepting of those who were different than us
 - (ii) more forgiving of those who might have wronged us
 - (iii) more loving of those who hate us;
 - (b) and who knows? They might respond in kind
 - (i) or they might not; but we have no control over that either.
 - (c) But somehow I can;t help but think, that if enough of us surrendered;
 - (i) We would experience that peace;
 - 1) and catch a glimpse of that New Jerusalem spoken of in the second reading;
 - 2) ,gleaming like a jewel, glowing and radiant;
 - 3) verdant with parks and lush with life
 - 4) full of beauty and peace;
 - 5) But we wouldn't see it in a city or a park
 - 6) we would see it everywhere.