

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Waning versus Metanoia**      Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time      Monday,  
November 14, 2016    8:15 AM    **Rev 1:1-4; 2:1-5;**    Lk 18:35-43    (Faith is a living  
relationship with God of trust that needs to be developed through communities.)

Today we are reading from the **Book of Revelation**, which is the last book in the New Testament, last written and last published. It is about the end in a way, although in an odd way it isn't. What it's really about is **the struggle of the Church in the end of the first and the beginning of the second centuries**, and the struggle in the Church was two-fold. Number one, **Christians were being persecuted** both by the authorities of the Roman Empire at different times, it went in waves, and also by Jews. The persecution by Jews was of various kinds, some of it ideological, arguing against, for example, faith in Christ or if accepting faith in Christ arguing that it had to be accompanied with also observance of Torah, and so on.

But there was another problem in the early Church, and that was **a gradual waning of enthusiasm, a cooling off of people's ardor**. And that is the particular focus of today's reading; it's the cooling off of people's ardor, whereby they are no longer that interested. It's easier to stay in bed rather than get up and go to church. **This is also a periodic experience of the Church**. It runs in cycles. We are in one right now, **where a lot of people are just somewhat indifferent**. It's as if, well, they really don't need the gospel or the Church or the sacraments or if they do, well, they don't need it too much; a little bit is enough. So there's **a waning of any kind of real enthusiasm or even discipline**.

And the problem is that when it comes to faith, **faith has to be nurtured and nourished, so does hope, so does love**. You can't say, for example, in a marriage, well, you never have to express love and yet the marriage will continue. Well, not very well it won't. Love needs to be nurtured. **People have to express their love and support of one another with loving actions**. The same with hope. Hope just doesn't exist in a vacuum. **Hope has to be supported with**

**actual vision.** That requires actually a sort of mental effort to think about, **to think about the whole picture**, to think about the future, to think about what one is doing every day and for what **so that everything can be put in proper focus.**

And of course that's true of faith, faith that doesn't simply exist like a rock. **Faith is a living relationship with God.** It's a relationship of **trust that needs to be developed**, and it is not something that we can have all by ourselves. It isn't me and God. That isn't how God works. It's not God's way. God's way is to work through people. Faith comes from a community of faith. **It exists and subsists in the world through communities, and people need to be part of a community in order for their faith to grow.** And if faith isn't growing, then it's receding. If it isn't moving forward, it's moving backward. And that's what we see **today: many people losing their faith**, perhaps not completely abandoning it, but it's not really a vital part of their life any more. It isn't doing what it needs to do to bring them peace and joy; that's for sure. **And so they become more jaded, more indifferent, more cynical, more anxious.** We see that all around us. This author's solution, remedy, for this situation is to renew the very source of our faith by *metanoia*. That's the word in the Greek, translated here "repentance." That doesn't always do the job. **It means to think anew about everything, especially God and his gospel.**