

The Glory to Be Revealed

Ordinary 15A 2014

Last week I noted that that the second reading at mass for the next several weeks will be taken from St. Paul's letter to the Romans. Given the importance of this letter for the Christian life, I said I would be focusing my homilies on this letter in the weeks ahead.

The portion of Romans we heard today is taken from chapter 8, which occurs midway through this letter. Up to this point, St. Paul has been wrestling with the great issues of sin and death, trying to explain why all of us, without exception, are in need of God's grace. But when he comes to chapter eight, the Great Apostle turns his attention the gift the Spirit.

It is the Spirit of God, he says, that gives us a share in God's life. It is the Spirit of God, dwelling within us, that enables us to live as God's children. It is the Spirit of God that assures us of resurrection life; for if the Spirit of God dwells in us as it dwelt in Christ, then God will raise us from the dead just as he raised Christ from the dead.

Having explained that God's Spirit is our promise of resurrection life, Paul goes further. It is not only we who will be saved; it is the whole of God's creation. This is why St. Paul writes that creation itself waits for that moment when we be revealed as the children of God. And this is why he says that creation itself will be

set free from the slavery and corruption of sin and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

As Paul sees it, we and creation are intimately related to each other. Just as we need God's creation to live, so creation needs us if it is to fulfill the purpose of God's plan. And so creation waits with eager longing for that final moment when we will be raised from the dead—what St. Paul calls “the redemption of our bodies.” For when we are saved, when we are raised to new and lasting life, creation itself will be set from the slavery of sin.

I love St. Paul because he helps me understand my Catholic faith in new and better ways. He helps me broaden my horizon so that I can understand how I fit into God's plan. For example, when I was a child, I thought of salvation in very personal terms: saving my soul, getting into heaven. But St. Paul helps me to understand that there is more to salvation than the salvation of just my soul. It is my body as well as my soul that will be saved when I am raised from the dead. But there is more. It is not only my body and soul that will be saved, it will be the whole of God's creation that will be renewed, changed and transformed in the kingdom of God.

How this will happen, I do not know. When this will happen, I do not know. But I am beginning to understand that God's plan of salvation is more glorious than I ever imagined: we will be saved, body as well as soul if we are faithful to

Jesus Christ; and the whole of God wonderful creation will be saved with us, if we are faithful to Jesus Christ. This is why St. Paul says the sufferings of the present are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. This is why we groan and wait in hope for God's salvation. This is something to hope for.