

Ordinary Time 20A, 2014

“The Gifts and the Call of God Are Irrevocable”

Sometimes, most of the time, it takes a long time for us to understand the meaning of certain events, especially tragic events. When we are in the midst of such events we cannot make any sense of them because we are too close to them. Why is this happening to me, we ask? Will it ever end? Where is the plan, the purpose, and the love of God in my life?

Saint Paul understood this very well. Jesus Christ had called him to be his apostle. In a dramatic moment of call and conversion, Paul's life was turned upside down so that the former persecutor of the faith became its greatest advocate. But something was wrong, something that Paul could not understand. Although he had seen the risen Christ, although he had preached Christ for several years, the majority of his people, the Jewish people, did not believe in the gospel.

Filled with sorry and anguish, the great apostle wondered if God had rejected the people he had delivered at the Red Sea, the people with whom he had made a covenant at Mount Sinai, the people he had rescued from exile. What happened? Had God's plan failed? Did God need to start all over again?

But toward the end of his life, Paul began to see how the threads of the pattern of God's plan were coming together. And after years of prayer and study, he began to understand something of what God was doing.

No, God had not rejected his people. As St. Paul writes in today's reading, *the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable*. God is faithful to us, even when we are not faithful to God. God always works for our good, even when we resist God's will. And so Paul begins to understand something of the mystery of salvation, something of the way in which God is acting in Jesus Christ.

What Paul begins to understand is this: Although his kinsmen have refused to accept the gospel at the present time, their refusal has resulted in others embracing the gospel. Their refusal has led to a vast number of Gentiles, non-Jewish people, believing in the Christ. But this not the end of the story, the faith of these non-Jewish believers will, in God's own time, in God's way, lead to the faith of Paul's Jewish compatriots. And when this happens all will be saved, Jew and Gentile alike.

You see, God has only one plan, and that plan is for our good, our salvation. Most of the time, however, especially in moments of trial and difficult, we cannot understand this plan. At such moments we feel abandoned and even betrayed by God. But *the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable*. God does not abandon those whom he calls. He has not abandoned the Jewish people, and he will not abandon us; *for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable*.