

Ordinary 14C 2016
A New Creation

For the past several weeks my homilies have dealt with the second reading, taken from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians. I have preached on this letter for two reasons. First, this is an important letter in which St. Paul explains how God saves us by the gift of Jesus Christ. Second, this letter has played an important role in my own life. I have read it over and over again, and every time I read it I gain a deeper understanding of how much God loves me. This letter has taught me that I have been saved by God's grace; and that God has given me the gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers me to live a good and holy life.

In this letter St. Paul teaches us that we are justified by God's grace, which means we are in a new, life-giving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. And so we ought to live with trusting faith because of what God has done for us in Christ. In the reading we heard today, St. Paul makes three points.

First, *he tells us that he only boasts in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* through which the world has been crucified to him, and he has been crucified to the world. Paul no longer boasts in his achievements because he knows that he has been saved by God's grace. And so he boasts in what God has done for him in Christ. He says that he has been crucified to the world and the world to him, which means he has died to an old way of life in order to enter into an entirely life with Jesus Christ.

Second, Paul says that *God has brought about a new creation in Jesus Christ*. In this new creation, God has broken down the barriers that divide us from each other. We have been baptized into Christ, and we belong to God's new creation in which the differences of race, nationality, and sexuality no longer separate from each other; for in Christ we are one. We have received the gift of the Spirit and live in God's new creation.

Third, St. Paul says that *he bears the marks of Jesus on his body*. His entire body is marked with the physical wounds he has received from preaching the gospel. He has preached the gospel in the face of great opposition, and his body is now tattooed with the scars he has suffered for Christ.

In this passage, Paul teaches us that since we are saved by God's gift in Christ (1) we too should boast in what God has done for us, (2) we too should live in a God's new creation, and (3) and we too should suffer with and for Christ

Every time I read this letter, I am filled with wonder at God's love for me in Jesus Christ. Because God loves me, God has graciously saved me by grace. Because God loves me, God has given me the gift of the Holy Spirit. Because God loves me, I am a new creation in Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, and so I live by the grace of Jesus Christ who loved me and gave himself for me.

Because God has saved us, we can live in a new way in God's new creation. Because God has given us his Holy Spirit, there is no need to be afraid or ashamed of our faith. Because God has saved us we are God's new creation in Christ, and we ought to live in love, in peace and in joy, confident and unafraid; for in Christ all things are new.