

Ordinary Time 12A 2017
Adam and Christ

This summer, the second readings that we will hear at Mass will be from Saint Paul's letter to the Romans. This letter is one of the most important writings of the New Testament because it provides us with a profound understanding of the gift of salvation we have in Jesus Christ. Since we will be listening to Romans for the next several weeks, and since it provides us with a rich understanding of our faith I will be devoting some of my homilies to this letter this summer.

The portion of Romans we heard today is difficult. If you found yourself wondering what Paul was saying, or if you have already forgotten what he said, I understand. So let me summarize what Paul says in three points.

First, St. Paul says that sin entered world through one man. The sin that Paul is talking about is the power of sin that we traditional call original sin, and the one man to whom St. Paul refers is the first human being we traditionally call "Adam." Whatever that first human did, he began a history of sin from which we suffer today. It is Adam's sin, this "original sin," that taints all of us from birth. Because of that sin, there is a tendency in each one of us toward sin; there is something that is not right. This is what St. Paul means when he writes that sin

entered the world through one man, and because of that one sin, we have all sinned and are in need of God's grace.

Second, St. Paul tells us that Sin introduced another power into the world, the power Death. There is a powerful link between sin and death because when we sin we separate ourselves from God. We affirm that we do not God, that our will and desire is more important than God's will. But without God, the Giver of Life, we cannot live. Without God, we are doomed to the power of death that is eternal separation from God who is the source of life. This is why sin leads to death—not just physical death—but eternal separation from God. For, if we separate ourselves from the Giver of Life, we will surely die.

Third, Paul says that the gift is not like the transgression. The gift St. Paul speaks of is the saving grace, the salvation that Jesus Christ brings. The transgression is the sin and death that Adam brings. But there is no comparison between what Adam and Christ have done. For, if the disobedience of Adam led to sin and death, the obedience of Christ has brought grace and life.

So we stand between two men: Adam who introduced sin and death into the world, and Christ who restored us to God's life. And ever since, life has been a choice between being in solidarity with the Adam who brings us to sin and death or with Jesus Christ, who brings us grace and life. The choice is between the selfish

pursuit of our own desire and the selfless giving of ourselves to God and each other through Christ.

Given that choice, why would anyone stand in solidarity with the old Adam of sin and death? And yet that people choose death over life every day. Every day they choose sin over grace when they prefer their selfish desire to God's will. The lingering effects of sin are still with us, and they have the power to pull us into the darkness of sin, if we allow them. That is why we need to affirm and reaffirm our solidarity with Christ every day; for Christ and only Christ is the source of life and grace.