

A Sense of Identity
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Nothing is more important than knowing who we are. When we know who we are, we know the purpose of our life. When we know who we are, we know how we must act. People with a strong identity live with a sense of mission because they understand the purpose of their life. This is why today's reading from Paul's letter to the Ephesians is so important. For, it provides us with a way to understand the fullness of our identity in light of God's divine economy, by which I mean God's plan for our salvation.

In this reading Paul reminds us (1) of what God has done for us, (2) who we are, (3) and where we are going. Paul tells us what is most important about our past, our present, and our future so that we can live a fully satisfying life that is fully pleasing to God.

Paul begins by giving thanks for the way in which God has blessed us. Before the foundation of the world, God had already chosen us to be holy and without blemish. In other words, we are part of a plan; we are part of God's economy of salvation. Before God created the world, God chose and destined us to be holy and without blemish in his presence.

Second, Paul reminds us that God destined us to be his adopted sons and daughters in Christ. Because of what God has done in Christ, we have—whether we realize it or not—a new relationship with God. Just as Christ is God's beloved Son, so we are God's beloved sons and daughters who bear the image of God's perfect Son, Jesus the Christ.

All of this, Paul tells us, was the result of Christ's death. Formerly we were burdened by our sins, the result of our rebellion against God. But now we enjoy the forgiveness of sins through the redemption that came at the cost of Christ's blood.

Finally, Paul tells us that God has revealed the mystery of his will in Christ, the plan that God established for our salvation. This plan—the divine economy of salvation—is to unite everyone and everything in Christ. And so Paul makes the astounding statement that Christ is the goal of our lives, the goal toward which everything is moving. God chose us in Christ, Paul writes, "so that we might exist for the praise of his glory."

The vision that Paul presents is breathtaking in scope. He tells us that God chose us to be his adopted sons and daughters. He assures us that God has redeemed us from our transgressions. He explains the purpose of our lives is to praise and glorify God; and he tells us that even creation will find its purpose and goal in Christ.

But if it is true that God chose us from all eternity to be holy, then we already know that the purpose of our life is to live in communion with God. If it is true that God has redeemed us from our sins by the blood of his Son, then we know we are no longer condemned to the powers of Sin and Death. If it is true that God has made us his adopted sons and daughters in Christ, then we know that the purpose of our life is to live as God's children. And if it is true that there is a divine plan, we can be confident that all will be well.

To be sure there are moments when things are not well in our life. To be sure there are moments we cannot see the goal and purpose of our life, much less the destiny of the world. At such times we ask if God is truly present to our life. We may even cry out in anger, "where is God?" But the reality—whether we are aware of it or not—is that we are part of God's plan. And so, in God's good time all will be well. God will have the last word, and all will be well.

In a few moments we will receive the Eucharist and enter into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. As we enter into this mystery that conforms us to the crucified and risen Christ, we ask for the grace to live in a way that reflects who we are in Christ.