

Reconciled in Christ
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Ordinary 16 B 2012

For the past two weeks, my homilies have dealt with texts taken from the letters of St. Paul. As one parishioner said to me last weekend, “Father, I get the impression that we are going to be hearing a lot about St. Paul.” She was right. Although I will eventually preach from the Gospels, in the weeks and months ahead I hope to introduce you to the fascinating world of Saint Paul: the one who is, in my view, the most important writer of the New Testament.

Today’s second reading, taken from the Apostle’s great letter to the Ephesians provides a good example of Paul’s importance for our understanding of the Christian life. At the beginning of this letter the Apostle describes God’s plan of salvation by explaining that God chose and elected us in Christ, from all eternity, to live for the praise of his glory.

In today’s reading, Paul focuses our attention on Christ’s work of reconciliation; that is to say, the work of uniting all people in Christ. Notice how the Apostle begins: “In Christ Jesus you who were once far off have become near by the blood of Christ.” Referring to the hostility that existed between the Jewish and the non-Jewish people of his own day, Paul reveals that Christ broke down the dividing wall that separated Jew and Gentile, so that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two.

Paul teaches us that God’s work of reconciliation in Christ is two-fold. First, God reconciled us to himself. When we were sinners, at that very moment, God reconciled us to himself through the blood of Christ. Second, not only did God reconcile us to himself, God reconciled us to each other as well. Whether we know it or not, God has made it possible for us to be one with each other because we are one in Christ.

By the death of Christ, then, we have been reconciled to God and to each other. There is no need for us to live in fear of God. There is no need for us to live in fear of each other. There is no need for us to be hostile toward God or toward each other. For if we are in Christ, then, we are reconciled to God and each other.

But this is not what most of us experience every day, is it? More often than we would like to admit, we find ourselves alienated from God who gives us life. More often than not, we find ourselves alienated from those with whom we ought

to be close and dear. More often than not we appear to be living in a world of senseless violence and hatred such as we witnessed this past week in Colorado.

But this is not what we learned in Christ. This is not what God did in Christ. This is not what Saint Paul teaches us in his letter to the Ephesians. This is not the way we ought to live. This is not what it means to be reconciled in Christ.

To be reconciled in Christ is to live in the freedom of the children of God, by which I mean to live in peace with God who created, redeemed, and reconciled us to himself. To be one in Christ is to be reconciled with each other because Christ has broken down the wall of hostility that separates us from each other.

Reflect upon our Christian life for a moment. Are we at peace with God? If not, why not, since God reconciled us to himself in Christ? Are we at peace with those around us, especially the members of our family? If not, why not, since God has reconciled us to each other in Christ? As the tragic events of this week show have shown us, we live in world that desperately needs the reconciliation and peace that God offers us in Christ.

In a few moments we will to receive the Eucharist, the sign of our unity and reconciliation in Christ. As we receive this sacrament, we ask for the grace to be reconciled to God and each other. We pray that God's grace will overcome the powers of hostility and violence that would destroy us.