

Homily for the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time July 11, 2021

The 11 verses we heard from Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians, in their original Greek, are actually one long sentence of over 200 words. Yet this complicated passage is worth meditating on for it profoundly distills some essential elements of our Christian faith.

In it, Saint Paul reflects on the cosmic dimension of God's plan for us. It is such a big and wonderful picture that we struggle to grasp it. Fortunately, Saint Paul provides a trinitarian outline to guide our thoughts. He tells us we were chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

We are Chosen by the Father

"[God the Father] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him in love."

Saint Paul never thought that he chose to do God's work. He always thought God chose him. As Jesus told His disciples: *"You did not choose me but I chose you"* (Jn.15:16). The same is true of us. We did not so much choose God as God chose us. And not just from the time of our birth, no, but from *"before the foundation of the world."* From before creation itself!

He chose us to be holy and blameless in His sight. Holy" here means set apart for God. Holy like the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jewish

priesthood, and the Sabbath. And to be blameless. The Greek word translated as “blameless” (*amomos*) is a sacrificial word. Under Jewish law an animal was only fit to be offered to God if it was without blemish (*amomos*).

God wants us to take every part of our lives – our work, family, friendships, pleasures and recreations – and keep them without blemish so that they can be fittingly offered to Him. We are to be a priestly people, taking all the things in our lives and in the world and offering them back to their Creator in praise and thanksgiving.

“He destined us for adoption as His children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will.”

God predestined us to be His adopted children. The reason for being baptized and confirmed is because God chose you to be a part of His family through His Son. And that life of Christ is given to you in the sacraments.

We are Redeemed by the Son

If God makes a plan and a promise, He keeps it. And God’s plan for our salvation was carried out by His Son. *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.”*

The good news is that God’s plan of salvation never relied on us but on Christ. *“In Him we have redemption.”* Redemption here has the connotation of buying back someone who has been enslaved and

setting him or her free. We were slaves to sin and unable to free ourselves. But God paid the price by sending His Son to die for us. Christ redeemed us. So, we have forgiveness of our sins.

And *“with all wisdom and insight God has made known to us the mystery of His will...that He set forth in Christ.”* Wisdom into the things of God once hidden but now revealed in Christ; insight into applying God’s will to our daily lives.

For God intends everything He created, everything He has entrusted to us, to be used in accordance with His plan. Because in the end, in *“the fullness of time,”* God intends *“to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.”*

Saint Paul tells us that *“in Christ we have also obtained an inheritance.”* An inheritance that is ours because we have been made sons and daughters of God. But it is the very nature of an inheritance that we do not yet fully possess it. We have it in pledge.

So, while presently we are subject to suffering, confusion, and sin, yet we have *“set our hope on Christ.”* Hope is a supernatural virtue that assures us that Christ will fulfill all His promises if we but trust and remain faithful to Him.

We are Sealed with the Holy Spirit

“In [Christ] you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and had believed in Him, were marked with the seal

of the promised Holy Spirit. This is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of His glory."

Our faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God's pledge that He will follow through on His promises. We were sealed with the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation. God marked us as His own.

And every day the Spirit works to keep us steadfast in faith, hope, and love. We are reminded that God has a plan and we are part of it. It is "*the Gospel of your salvation*" which was accomplished in Christ. And every Sunday we gather to receive through Word and Sacrament another installment of God's pledge.

And so, Saint Paul has given us a glimpse of God's grand and glorious plan stretching across eternity. The Father chose you. The Son redeemed you. The Spirit seals you. What is left for you to do? Simply to praise God's glory with your lips and with your lives.