

Homily For Tuesday of the 29th Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1
St Peter's 8:30 AM & 7:00 PM Mass - October 24, 2023

(St. Anthony Mary Claret)

Romans 5:12-21 "Judgment from one sin is condemnation but the free gift from many sins brought life."

Psalms 40 "I delight to do your will, O my God. Your law is within my heart."

Luke 12:35-38 "Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes during the night."

Grace Comes Through Obedience

Introduction

Many years ago, a friend used an image about our human condition that has stuck with me for decades. He said that most people are like ants crawling around examining our own tracks. That's what I was like yesterday, cleaning up the garden before the snow would come. But my friend meant that our whole lives can be like this, where our vision is limited.

Romans

Paul's letter to the Romans is deep in theology, but it is more understandable if we just look up from the ground at the big picture, at God's plan to bless all people. A key element of that plan is obedience. Through an act of disobedience by one man, sin came into the world, affecting everyone after him.

Adam's sin opened us up to death, spiritual death for sure, but physical death also results from that sin. Death is clearly not God's 'Plan A'. When we see loved ones die, it is tragic because this is not God's intent. We have to get this, that physical suffering and death, often very tragic even in human terms, is how we see sin acting in the physical world.

The obedience that undoes the effects of that sin is by Jesus Christ dying on the cross when he did not have to. Adam's sin spread like the worst wild fires. It becomes a whole culture of death. Even the holiest are not exempt from its effects. It was as if our spiritual DNA had been corrupted and that DNA sin gene switch was always ready to be flipped on, like cancer.

But Jesus has the power to put that fire out himself. He does this as a free gift, which we call grace. He makes possible a culture of life just when it seems like death has the upper hand.

One man justifies sinners. One man undoes many sins. One man offers a free gift to undo many sins. One man's obedience makes many people righteous. Paul calls Adam a 'type' of the one who is to come. In the world of advertising, he is the new and improved Adam. In the world of computer programs, he is Adam 2.0. But in the world of faith, it means that the original faults and failings are healed. Jesus is not just the new and improved version. He is their perfection. Everywhere where sin is increasing, the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, increases even more, leading to eternal life through that same Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Psalm

Today's psalmist could in a way imagine this grace centuries before. He already knows that animal sacrifices won't be enough to repair the effects of sin, and that God doesn't really need those sacrifices anyway. So how is God going to rescue his people from their idolatry, their sins against justice? Only the sacrifice of the sinner's heart will bring him or her into right relationship with God. So he says, "Here I am, O my God. Your law is within my heart." Psalm 40 reinforces the requirement of obedience. "I come to do your will," he says.

The Psalmist, and the millions who pray this psalm subsequently, offer their obedience as atonement. This has to suffice until the promised one, whose obedience is so perfect and so powerful, that it finally does what every good person tried to do before, God's will. And God's will causes what it desires. It brings about forgiveness of sins.

Luke

This is exactly what Jesus says to his audience, "Be ready. Be dressed for action." How does that relate? The person who is ready will not be attached to the things of this world, including his own pride, the many ways he thinks he can save himself, justify himself, make himself righteous. Instead, what is necessary is that we are ready to receive our master. That is the obedience that is required of us. If

we call on the free gift of grace, we can make obedience possible, and he will bless us in unimaginable ways. He will sit down with us and serve us." Again today, we will experience this as he serves us with his own life giving body, blood, soul and divinity. What a joy to realize that, even though unworthy and sinner, it will all be up to me to open the door for the Lord, when He finally comes! My sinful heart will be transformed by grace.

Call to Conversion

Important for us to know is that the many effects of sin are no match for the one effect of grace which comes to us from and through the obedience of Jesus Christ. In our personal experience of temptation and addictions and jealousies and worldly attachments, it seems like there is a great battle going on between two more or less equal forces, with the battle victory seriously in doubt. That's what it often feels like for us at ground. Knowing that God desires us to be righteous, we are left to our own devices to fend off temptation.

The story of salvation, God's great plan to bless all people, makes it clear that there is a real problem, but that there is clearly a path to victory that is undeniable because of the free gift of God. Let us receive it and embrace it again in this Eucharist.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *All the earth shall bow down before you, O God, and shall sing to your name.*

Collect: *Almighty ever living God, who govern all things in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the pleading of your people and bestow your peace on our times.*

Romans: *Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, so death spread to all, because all have sinned. Death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. Therefore just as by the disobedience of one person the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one person the many will be made righteous. But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Psalm: *Hear I am Lord, I come to do your will. In the scroll of the book it is written of me: "I delight to do your will, O my God. Your law is within my heart. I have told the glad news of deliverance. I have not hidden your saving help within my heart. I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation.*

Luke: *Jesus said to the disciples: "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit. Be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so.*