

Homily for May 10, 2017

In today's Collect is expressed a beautiful understanding of the Grace available to us as Christians. In it are three couplets, that is pairs of ideas that express our relationship to God. We prayed:

**O God,
life of the faithful,
glory of the humble
blessedness of the just**

Psalm 67 helps to understand the theme of this prayer for there the psalmist prays:

May God be gracious and bless us and make his face to shine upon us.

God's graciousness is like a spring morning. People who know the gracious favour of God have a birdsong in their heart, and a hopeful attitude because their faith inspires their daily walk. Last week I was on retreat just outside of Boston and from my bedroom window I saw blue jays and orioles. All around were flowering trees that spoke of new life and new opportunity. There was a graciousness I experienced there that was life giving. God is the life of the faithful in much the same way. To have faith is to root our lives in the Easter Gospel. Such a Gospel is hope-filled because it announces the Word of God that in the words of the psalm "makes known God's ways upon the earth".

"May God be gracious and bless us and make his face to shine upon us" says the psalmist. I love this biblical image of the face of God shining upon us, for such a countenance is indeed the glory of the humble. St. Paul in Second Corinthians 3:18 captures the meaning of the shining countenance of the Lord when he writes:

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

To be changed into the likeness of the Lord happens when we remember who we are, humble people of the earth. Remember this is what the word humility means. It is to be of Adam, people who because we are grounded in our humanity can be elevated to the heights of the Lord's glory. Here in the Eucharist we behold the Lord's presence and then consume our most gracious host. In His 1980 Letter to Bishops and Priests, that he wrote every Holy Thursday during the years of his Papacy St John Paul II caringly tells us:

We must always take care that this great meeting with Christ in the Eucharist does not become a mere habit and that we do not receive Him unworthily... We cannot, even for a moment, forget that the Eucharist is a special possession belonging to the whole Church. It is

the greatest gift in the order of grace and of sacrament that the divine Spouse has offered and unceasingly offers to His spouse.

When we approach the Lord in this way we will discover more deeply how he is indeed the glory of the humble which leads naturally to the third couplet, "the blessedness of the just". The just are those who in Christ Jesus have been brought into a right relationship with the Lord. Having been justified by Jesus they now make it their aim to live the rest of their earthy life in relationship with their Lord. St. Paul in Ephesians 2:10 talks about Christ justifying grace when he summarizes the whole of the Christian life this way:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

What can bring us a greater sense of blessedness than knowing that we are Christ Jesus' workmanship? The Christian is not the self-made man or woman by the divinely redeemed man or woman whose life in Christ is lived as a life of good works, so the grace that Jesus has worked into our souls can now be worked out in daily life.

May I invite each of you this morning to remember that our God is the life of the faithful, the glory of the humble and the blessedness of the just. As we have a deepening awareness of how our lives are coupled with the Lord's then as the Collect goes on to say, we can more meaningfully and thoughtfully pray:

Listen kindly to the prayers of those who call on you, that they who thirst for what you generously promise may always have their fill in your plenty.