

Homily for October 11<sup>th</sup> 2020

“Set free by faith”

We have been reading St, Pauls’ letter to the Galatians over the past week. I find this is one of the most difficult letters of the Apostle Paul to interpret because it is very technical. Today’s passage is a case in point. Therefore I would like to walk through it with you verse by verse:

***<sup>23</sup> Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. <sup>24</sup>***

The faith Paul is speaking of here is faith in Jesus Christ. Prior to the coming of Jesus the law, which is good, showed us how we are imprisoned by sin. In Romans 7 Paul describes this in relation to his own life.

***Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”<sup>1</sup>***

The law is therefore like the speed limit signs on the road. They tell us how fast we can go. If we break the limit, we may get away with it, or we may see a flashing light behind us or get one of those letters in the mail. There is no mercy here. You broke the law and if caught, payment is required. Paul is aware that when it comes to covetousness that he is all too guilty. Even though he knew the speed limit, so to speak, he kept on breaking the law of covetousness. Imprisoned under the law. He then goes on to say:

**Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,**

Twice the word disciplinarian is used in these verses. It refers to a household slave in Hellenistic society who was charged by a father to oversee the moral formation of his son. This tutelage normally lasted from the time the child was a minor until he reached maturity. The tutor would accompany the youth to and from school, supervise his daily activities, protect him from dangers, and administer discipline whenever necessary. Paul used this familiar custom to explain how the Mosaic Law served a similar function in Israel. It was an instructor and guide for the nation, yet one that was temporary and destined to pass away. The coming of Christ meant that Israel could now be freed from the supervision and restraints of the Mosaic Law to embrace the full inheritance awaiting it in the New Covenant the thing Paul says next:

***<sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. <sup>27</sup> As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.***

No longer is the tutor required because now that we are clothed in Christ we are children of God, To be clothed with Christ, means that we have been offered grace so that we appropriate the gift

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (Ro 7:7). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

of our baptism in the sacraments of the Church. In the Eucharist we receive the very life of Jesus so that we can be transformed by his love to become more like him. In Reconciliation we identify how sin still influences our lives so that we can show true contrition, and receive the absolution which cancels our debt. Our faith in Christ inspires us to then recognize are equality in Christ.

***<sup>28</sup> There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.<sup>2</sup>***

Because all of us are guilty under the law, regardless of race, gender or social standing, the measurements we use so often separate us and divide us and exclude us. This is not to be true of the Church, Our identity is defined by belonging to Christ. And when we know we are his we will then understand what Jesus meant when in today's Gospel he says:

***Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"***

Blessedness is to know God's favour. To therefore hear the world of God is to take to heart the Gospel of grace as taught by Paul and to daily live our lives keeping the merciful Jesus before us as we recognize our inherent dignity and equality in Christ.

It was this our Lady always did when on earth and in heaven she beholds his merciful face as she continually prayers for us.

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<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (Ga 3:23–29). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.