

Homily for October 27, 2021

Today's verses from Romans urge us to have confidence in a future under God's control and to shape our present acts, with this confidence in mind. Paul points to God's future which already gives meaning to our present and assures us that we already enjoy a foretaste of his final redemption. We are like people on a drought-parched land, who hear the distant thunder of the approaching storm. The freshening wind brings with it the smell of rain and the first few drops of moisture. We rejoice as we stand on that barren land, knowing it will soon be washed with the life-giving rain whose presence we already sense. So, we stand in our parched and barren present, looking forward with confidence to God's redemption we see begun in Christ, a redemption sure to come because with the Spirit's presence, we already feel those first showers of God's own healing love.¹

With this image in mind think with me about this Romans text. The Holy Spirit joins with us in our own groaning because in this world, as we heard in yesterday's reading, all of creation is groaning, longing to be liberated from what can in the present seem like futility. All those forms of suffering that can leave people questioning what it is all for. We want answers.....

But notice what Paul does. He doesn't give answers so much as assuring the Holy Spirit is present with us in our own sufferings with sighs too deep for words. Now remember the word for Spirit in Hebrew is "Ruach", meaning "breath" or "wind". In this world there are times when we have no words to explain fully the purpose and meaning of suffering. However, Paul wants us to know that because Jesus entered fully into this sighing and sorrowful suffering of this world we can trustingly affirm"

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called
according to his purpose. ²

The reason we know that all things do work together for good because Jesus embodies this in his life, passion, death and Resurrection. This is the only basis for Paul's assurance.

Notice progression of thought in verses 29-30. God foreknew us, that is he desired us to belong to him and so predestined us to share in the life of Jesus, which means in this world also sharing in his suffering. But when we know that our suffering is joined to his we realize that we are in the family where through the course of this life we are being realigned to God's ways and purposes – what it means to be justified - so that one day we will be fully glorified.

When we choose to allow this perspective to shape who we are we discover that we are to strive to enter in through the narrow door. To recognize that our life is all about living with an attitude of faith that lives trustingly in Jesus, even when we are groaning through what the "Hail Holy Queen", "describes as "this valley of tears"

¹ Achtemeier, P. J. (1985). *Romans* (pp. 147–148). Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press.

² *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Ro 8:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

The man or women of faith has confidence not because of the state of the world, but because of the state of Jesus Christ. Jesus calls us to live heroically and generously in the present as we stand on the parched land of this present world we can say with the psalmist that although at times shaken by life's sorrow and pain, "All my hope , O Lord is in your loving kindness".