

15th Sunday Ord. Time (B)
July 11, 12, 2015
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes

The last couple of weeks I have attempted to walk the fine line that separates the sphere of religion from the spheres of the secular and the political. I have received no phone calls as yet, so I trust I was able to 'walk the line' somewhat successfully. Those thoughts came to me from thinking about the gospels of those Sundays in light of the current events of those particular weeks. This week I was especially attracted to the wonderful text that is the Second Scripture for our liturgy.

Today's second Scripture is indeed a marvelous text. Many scholars of Scripture consider these words of St. Paul to the Ephesians to be an ancient hymn, maybe even something that was used in early Christian assemblies of worship. Consider again some of the text:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens”

God the Father has blessed us with Christ.

“In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us.”

We are lavishly graced and blessed, and one of the blessings is forgiveness.

“In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor....”

God has revealed his plan to us; God has let us in on his mystery.

And all of this, as St. Paul says, “for the praise of the glory of God's grace.”

Because we are graced and blessed, we praise the glory of God. Actually we are called to praise God. Yes, we have a common vocation, and in its most naked and essential truth, it is the vocation to praise God. Ultimately nothing else we do really matters. And if we do not praise God, then everything else we do certainly doesn't matter. We are gifted with God. We are invited into the Mystery of God. We are called to praise God's wonder and glory. As St. Paul says, *“God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens.”*

What is the source of this vocation of ours? From where does it come? It comes from our baptism into Christ, through which we are *“lavishly graced and blessed.”* From that moment on, every moment we live, every choice we make is destined to be lived and decided in the light of the mystery of God's grace and love. We have been immersed in it. We cannot get away from it, unless, of course, we make a deliberate choice to separate ourselves from God. We are to live in such a way that our lives, again as St. Paul says in today's second Scripture, *“sum up all things up in Christ”*.

Sometimes when I am near enough to hear someone answering their cell phone, I hear them say, “What's up?” Then I suppose the person on the other end tells them what is happening. There is a great line in today's second Scripture that could actually serve as a response to the question, “What's up?”

“All things in the heavens and on earth are being brought into one under Christ's headship.”

Now I realize that if you ever did answer this way to the question “What's up?”, you would be considered more than a bit strange. Nonetheless, that is precisely what is happening, whether or not my or your experience at the moment bears that out. And maybe often it does not. Nonetheless, it is important to at least consider how our lives measure up to that understanding of what is really happening at the core of existence. We are lavishly graced, and lavishly gifted with the Mystery of God. It is our mission as disciples to live lives that show that “yes”, *“all things are being brought into one under Christ.”*

Today's First Scripture continues the theme of prophets and prophesy from last weekend, and today's gospel gives counsel about what to take with us on our walk as disciples. We are to depend almost entirely on the power of God, rather than on all the extra baggage we often feel to be so important. As mentioned last week, we are not 'official prophets', but if we live lives with the understanding that *“all things are indeed being brought into one under Christ”*, that *“all things are being summed up in Christ”*, we will indeed be prophetic. Our lives will appear different to others. They may even ask us what motivates us to live the way we do. And then we will have the opportunity to share with them just how *“lavishly blessed and graced by God”* we are. We may even have an opportunity to share with them how God is our treasure, how we live in and with the Mystery of God. We love others, because we are blessed and we see them as blessed. We care for the poor because we are blessed as see them as blessed also. We hear the words of Pope Francis and take them to heart, again because we are *“lavishly blessed and graced by God.”* And for all of this we are grateful and faithful.

Today's Scriptures have much for us to think about and much for us to be inspired by. Let us close listening to this prayer.

“Loving God, we love how you love us. We love how you free us. We love what you have given and created to surround us. Help us to recognize, and to rejoice in, what has been given, even in the midst of what is not given. Help us not to doubt all that you have given us, even when we feel our very real shortcomings. We thank you for the promise and sign of your love in the Eternally Risen Christ, pervading all things in the universe, unbound by any of our categories of logic or theology. We offer you ourselves back in return. We offer you our bodies, our little lives, our racing minds, and our restless hearts into this one wondrous circle of Love that is You. My life is no longer just about me, but it is all about you.” Richard Rohr, *Yes, And ...*, page 261