

O, Happy Fault

There are many layers to the Gospel. When Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah to the people of his hometown of Nazareth, it all seems like good news. Jesus tells them that he has been anointed to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free. How wonderful. What a great message!

But, then, they think about it a little more deeply. Could it be that Jesus is saying that they are poor? That they are oppressed, blind, and in need of rescue? His words are not so gracious anymore. Who does he think he is? They end up driving him out of the synagogue and trying to hurl him over the brow of the hill on which their town was built. His words and message were totally misunderstood.

We can only hope that the deeper meaning of Jesus' words came to them later. What the Nazarenes were not grasping is that it is good to be poor, if that means we live our lives dependent upon God. It is good to proclaim liberty in the Messiah who conquered death to give us life. It is even good to be blind if it means that, by acknowledging our blindness, we come to be filled with God's light and love. Then, even oppression will not enslave us.

"O, happy fault," we sing at the Easter Vigil, "O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!" The Adam and Eve story is our story. We can regain our trusting relationship with God only when we acknowledge the pettiness and selfishness of our sins and our utter dependence upon God's grace. We will never become like God without obeying God.

Which brings us to a final point. St. Alphonsus Liguori often said that we have a God who is crazy in love with us. How true. 1 John 4:19 puts it this way: "We love God because God first loved us." God is love (1 John 4:16) and love doesn't create barriers. Love doesn't remember offenses. Love does not brood over injuries or impose conditions. Love doesn't measure, reason, or calculate. We love God simply because God's love dwells within us. Our only response is to obey God's commandments. What else can we do? It is God's love, after all, that sustains us in being. And this same Love is available to us every day in Word and sacrament. O happy fault. Let us rejoice and be glad.

Blessings,

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