

12<sup>th</sup> Sunday per Annum  
Jeremiah 20:10-13;  
Romans 5:12-15 ;  
Matthew 10:26-33  
Little Flower - 6/25/17

My Brothers and Sisters,

For the first time since Lent began, we are celebrating a Sunday in Ordinary Time. The beauty of Ordinary Time is that the Church does not ask us to focus on a particular aspect of faith but allows the readings to speak to us freely. As with all of Scripture, today's readings reveal God to us and us to ourselves.

Every year at the Easter Vigil, after processing into the darkened church with the Easter candle, we sing the Exultet. The Exultet contains the beautiful verse: "O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!" Today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Romans is the basis for that verse.

"O happy fault..." As much as we might imagine what life would have been like if Adam had never sinned, the apostle Paul tells us that we are actually better off than we would have been if he had not sinned. This seems impossible to believe when we think about all the sin, suffering, sickness, and death that exists in our world, especially with all the terrorism and persecution that exists today. What St. Paul is telling us is that if we had not sinned, God would not have sent his Son Jesus into the world to live among us as one of us and we would be the worse off because of it. If God had not sent his Son into the world and if Jesus had not died for us, we would have been God's creation, but we could never have become God's sons and daughters and, therefore, brothers and sisters of one another.

"O happy fault" means that God's love and mercy are greater than our sins. There is no sin or sins that God will not forgive. God is a God of infinite mercy. One of the mistakes we make in our understanding of God is to project onto God our understanding of justice as punishment or retribution. If mercy is the quality most proper to God, God's mercy is God's justice. As the former Sacramentary put it, "Lord our God, in you justice and mercy meet..." In the former Sacramentary, we also prayed, "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in your unbounded mercy you have revealed the beauty of your power through your constant forgiveness of our sins."

"O happy fault" also means that our sins are forgiven before we even commit them. Because Jesus died once for all, this means that all sins—past, present, and future—were forgiven when he died on the cross. All we have to do is accept the forgiveness he won for us. One of the reasons we find it hard to believe that God will forgive anything and everything is because we find it hard to forgive others or ourselves.

Finally, in today's Gospel, Jesus reveals to us the providence of God: "*Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge.*" The word *providence* has at least two meanings. Philosophically, it means God's foresight, i.e., his plan to bring all of creation and each of us to our final destiny. Biblically, it suggests that God provides for his people. If we look back on our lives, most of us can see God's plan for us in the trajectory of our lives and we can see examples where God provided for us. As St. Paul wrote, "*We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose*" [Rom. 8:28].

My brothers and sisters, today's readings also reveal us to ourselves. Jeremiah's prayer in the first reading is a powerful reminder that God does not promise us a life without challenges and difficulties. Second, if God has forgiven us even before we sin, we should forgive others and ourselves. Finally, if we believe in God's providence, we have no reason to fear, no reason to be afraid.