

18 Sunday C

August 1, 2010

Cathedral

8:00 and 12:00

Theme: We've been bequeathed the inheritance—the true one given in baptism—and we can't fall prey to **“the greed that is idolatry.”**

“Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.’”

It was all about stuff, what belongs to whom. Jesus shrugged off the guy's greed. **“Take care...one's life does not consist of possessions.”**

“Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.” He misses the whole point. Sisters and brothers: We've already gotten the inheritance, and it's been recklessly shared with us by our Brother, Christ Jesus!

For these last four Sundays we've heard from the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Colossians. And, for the most part these four Sundays, St. Paul has taught us about baptism. **“You were buried with Jesus in baptism,”** so Paul wrote, **“in which you were also raised with him”** (2:12). And remember what we heard last Sunday, the I.O.U. owed God because of our transgressions, our sins, well, Paul teaches that Christ **“removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross”** (2:14) Forgiven, redeemed by his blood, but there is more! Paul teaches us that we, in baptism, become children of God by adoption, and we therefore are **“co-heirs with Christ”** (Romans 8:17). In baptism, we're given a claim on the inheritance! (1)

That's not how it's supposed to work. You know how inheritance is doled out: Do the family name good; do the family name proud, and you'll get your share of the inheritance. God just does it the other way around in baptism. Jesus has nailed our transgressions to the cross, and when we have nothing to bring to the table to make our case before God...well, in baptism we're made children of God by adoption. And more: in baptism, we're given the inheritance as a gift—that is, we become co-heirs with Christ and given the gift of eternal life!

Yes, God takes a risk with us in baptism. Because of the great love God has shown us in his Son Jesus, God hopes that we'll do the family name proud in gratitude. We don't earn the inheritance; we don't do good deeds in order to get "brownie points" with God and merit the inheritance. Instead, we've been given the inheritance as a gift. So Paul wants us, in gratitude, to **"take off the old self with its practices and put on the new self."** Paul gets very practical: **"Stop lying...put to death immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry."** Oh yes, the Apostle Paul brings up greed, just as does Jesus in the Gospel. We need to hear that. Our culture seduces us to keep running on the treadmill of acquisition, going after more and more stuff. All that stuff is really God's, and ours is to share it with those in need, not hoard it for ourselves.

Our faith teaches us a far different way. It's at complete variance with how our culture acts. God has shared the inheritance with us in the gift of Christ Jesus. In baptism we've been made children of God, and given the pledge of the inheritance. Don't we want to live up to the family name?

(1) For "inheritance," (*kleronomia*) in the New Testament, see Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), pp. 443-46.

At the end of Mass, the following comment:

Twelve years ago I spent most of the summer in Mexico, taking part in what is called an “immersion” program, that is, taking an intensive course in the Spanish language, and living with a Mexican family (that couldn’t speak any English). Totally “immersed,” then, in the language and culture.

I lived in a city in southwest Mexico, a city of more than a million persons, called Cuernavaca. In the neighborhood where I lived, not too far away, there was a cemetery. At different times I would walk past the front gates of this cemetery; over its front gate, there was an arched entrance with a saying inscribed in large wrought iron letters:

**“Postraos aquí, la eternidad empieza
es polvo la mundanal grandeza.”**

**“Come on in, eternity begins,
and worldly greatness becomes only dust.”**

Instead, we’re to put our focus on being “rich in what matters to God”!

