

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: “We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. They are the ones he chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” Rm. 8: 28 – 29

And that’s why I could begin this evening/morning by calling each of you my Brother or Sister in Jesus.

Nearly every Sunday, the second reading is from one of Paul’s Letters; and I just quoted a piece of today’s reading from Romans.

In those few words is enshrined the treasure, and the pearl Jesus speaks of in the Gospel.

The fact that, because of our Baptism into Jesus, we belong together as the Family of God: and the Father’s House, in His Kingdom, is the ultimate destination to which everyone is called.

There, to enter into an intimate communion of love, and friendship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

You know, Christianity is the only religion who believes in One God, but that God is a family.

The Family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Blessed Pope John Paul II reflected on that truth in these words: ‘God in His deepest mystery [he said] is not a solitude, but a family, since He has in Himself fatherhood, sonship, and the essence of the family, which is love.’

Incorporated into the living Body of Christ – the Church – we become ‘children in the Son.’

We become children in the eternal household of God. We share in the life of the Trinity.

So the Catholic Church is nothing less than the universal Family of God.

However, being part of the ‘Family’ doesn’t mean we can just passively sit back, and receive the treasures and the pearls it gives to us.

We have to strive to fully play our part as members of the ‘Family’

If, in this life, we’re content to just drift along – maybe even keeping up the veneer of being a good Catholic – and not striving to live for Jesus; then we’ve risked nothing for Him, and His Kingdom.

If, in this life, we haven’t striven to: “Love the Lord [our] God with all [our] heart and with all [our] soul and with all [our] strength and with all [our] mind.” Lk. 10: 27

Instead, if we cocoon ourselves in a life of ‘making do’ in our Christian faith, and not giving of ourselves wholly to Jesus, then we won’t be anything like the two men in the Parable.

We’ll hide the treasure, never buy the field, and leave it to rot away.

We’ll throw away the pearl beyond price of knowing Jesus, for the fake pearl of ‘making do’ with just what this world has to offer.

And that’s certainly not what Jesus wants for us.

His heart’s desire is, not only for us to live eternally with Him, but to begin that love affair in the here, and now.

And it begins with the gift of Baptism.

Yes, it’s a gift; but it’s a costly gift.

Costly for God, the Father: for, to unlock the treasure and the pearl to be found in Baptism, He gave His One and Only Son so that, through His dying and rising, we could die to sin, and live for Him.

Costly, too, for us.

Costly; because through our being Baptised into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Father asks us to place our entire life into His hands.

Not because He wants to play the Divine puppeteer, and have absolute power over us for the sake of it.

No: He asks that of us so that, in a communion of love, and friendship with Jesus, we can fulfil our life’s work of bringing His Kingdom to hold sway in every corner of Creation.

For the whole of our life – not just the Catholic ‘bit’; the Sunday Mass ‘bit’ – to become encompassed absolutely by Jesus: because only the Christian life, in this life, is an absolute.
But it isn’t an absolute that restricts our freedom, or makes us less human.
Actually, to be a Christian – to live for Jesus – makes us fully human; not less human.
And, it gives us true freedom, because it opens up our souls to eternity: to the limitless joy, and excitement of knowing Jesus in this life, and eternally.
Because, as Paul says in another of his Letters: “If our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.” 1 Cor. 15: 19
The Christian life is something to be enjoyed to the full, not just endured.
And, really, the only way to enjoy it is to fall in love with Jesus: to become His friend for life.
That’s been my experience since, at the age of 18, I became a Catholic after having had no faith in God at all.
Very often people say to me that you feel like that because you’re a convert.
But, you know, if you’re a ‘Cradle Catholic’ as those who’ve been one all their lives are called, it doesn’t mean that you too can’t have that same experience.
All of us – whether we’re convert or ‘Cradle Catholics’ – need to arrive at a moment in our lives when we ask the Holy Spirit to reignite our Baptism, and really come to know Jesus as our Saviour, and Friend.
And one ‘Cradle Catholic’ who insists we all need to have a personal relationship – a friendship – with Jesus, is Pope Benedict.
Speaking from his life-long experience, he said this at his Inauguration as Pope: “There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and speak to others of our friendship with Him.”
Pope Benedict XVI: Inauguration Homily April 2005
The great thing with knowing Jesus like this is that it takes away any fear or apprehension one may have of God; and of having to face Him at the judgement at the end of our lives.
For, as John, the Apostle of God’s love, puts it in his First Letter: “Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.” 1 Jn. 4: 18
It’s very hard for anyone, including me, to admit that I’m not the most important person in the world. To admit that I’m not the one who’s in charge of my life.
To realise that there is something: no, not something, ‘Someone,’ to whom I must yield my pride and self-sufficiency and say: ‘You’re the Lord of my life, not me.’
And that Lord is Jesus...
The Lord who calls each Christian to advance His work of saving the world from: “Pointless futility.” Rm. 8: 20 so as to lead everyone into: “The freedom and glory of the children of God.” Rm. 8: 21
When our witness to Jesus works powerfully in someone’s life to bring them into: “The freedom and glory of the children of God.” Rm. 8: 21
When our witness to Jesus urges them to be conformed to Jesus through Baptism, and to flood their hearts with love for God by His Spirit.
When the Gospel, made flesh in our lives, produces faith like that in someone, then they’ve found the treasure, they’ve found the pearl.
Then, they can begin the adventure of being moulded by the Lord into: “True images of his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” Rm. 8: 29
The Family of God in the Body of our Brother, Jesus, which is the Church.