

15 Sunday B

July 11, 2021

St. Patrick

Starting today, and for the next seven Sundays, the church gives us selections from the New Testament Letter to the Ephesians. We hear the beginning of this letter, and it offers one of the handful of Bible verses I love the most. This verse says this: **“In Christ, and through his blood, we have been redeemed, and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God’s favor to us”** (1:7).

A month ago, after Sunday Mass, I was talking with a young family in the parish. The father told me that their six-year-old daughter had a question for him one night, and he told her that should be a Father Val question. So, standing up in a pew, she asked me, “How did God come alive?” She wanted to know, if God was first before everything else, how did God come alive.

I made a stab at the answer. She looked at me—respectfully, for sure. Without saying anything, her look clearly told me, “Daddy can answer my questions better than you can, Father Val.”

The Letter to the Ephesians simply starts off by teaching that **“Before the foundation of the world, God chose us in Christ.”** It doesn’t say how God came alive, because the letter knows that God is always alive. There was no starting point with God. It does say, though, that *before* time even began, God looked out and had a loving vision for us. God chose us to be, in Jesus, **“adopted children,”** and, yes, destined to be **“holy and blameless.”** That’s what is celebrated when each of us was baptized.

At the start of this New Testament letter, God is optimistic about all of us. Yes, God knows we all miss the mark, but then this letter stresses God’s reckless—even excessive—love for us. It’s a Bible verse which gives me consolation and solace. **“In Christ, and through his blood, we have been redeemed, and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God’s favor to us.”**

How extravagant God is! **“Before the foundation of the world,”**—that is, before time began, God saw that we all will terribly miss the mark. We’ll all “blow it,” and we sin. In Jesus, however, *all* our sins have been forgiven!

Back in March, a beloved priest in our diocese, Father David Knight, died. He was a great influence on my life. Years ago, Father Knight asked me a question—a

tough one, like that six-year-old quizzed me. He asked: “Val, do you think God has forgiven the sins we haven’t even committed yet?”

Now, I learned over many years that Father Knight already had an answer, and wanted to see if I agree with him. Still, I’ve pondered that question for years. And, I think Father Knight was on target. God has forgiven *all* our sins, even those I haven’t even committed yet, and you either. As one of the other New Testament letters teaches us, God nailed to the wood of the cross the debt notice we all owe God due to our sins (Colossians 2:14). Nailed it to the tree. No more debt, then, that we owe God.

What does all this mean for us? From before time began until now, God looks out at us and still has a grand vision of us—that we’re God’s adopted children, **“holy and beloved”** still in the eyes of God, and always. It’s much like those parents of that six-year-old. They have hearts full of love for her, no matter the detours she may make in life. I think that she knows that, and their vision empowers her to live more confidently, shrugging off any fears.

St. Patrick’s: Let’s savor how God looks at all of us—**“We have been redeemed, and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God’s favor to us.”** By God’s grace, let’s live up to that extravagant vision God has of us!

General Intercessions

July 11, 2021

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Open our hearts that we might experience being redeemed in the blood of Christ and consecrated by our baptism to share in his mission; we pray to you, O Lord—

Bring full recovery to Pope Francis after surgery; and bring healing and hope within our church and nation; we pray to you, O Lord—

Give courage to those discerning a call to lay or ordained ministries, or to religious life; we pray to you, O Lord—

Lift up the people of Haiti in the midst of crisis, chaos, and suffocating poverty; we pray to you, O Lord—

Give support and solace to the brokenhearted, those who suffer from depression, and those who suffer great loss; we pray to you, O Lord—

Open your embrace to all who have died, especially Howard “Pops” Gillespie, and Charlotte Westenberger; we pray to you, O Lord—

