

Palm Sunday—March 28, 2012
Text: Philippians 2:5-11
Theme: A Beautiful Mind

This text from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians used to bother me. "have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus..." You know, if I could have Jesus' mind, that would solve a great many problems for me. It would be like a super power and I could just call it up to solve every dilemma! Someone says something to me that seems insulting or insensitive? No problem! I just call up the mind of Jesus and instantly forgive them. I am presented with the opportunity to do something that I know conflicts with God's Law? No problem! Just call up the mind of Jesus and presto! Temptation is overcome. When I heard pastors preach on this text, I used to think, "Oh sure, easy for you! You're a pastor!" And then I discovered that pastors are no more immune to sin than anyone else. In fact, I think Satan often works harder on us in hopes of shaking the confidence the people have in God by shaking the confidence they have in their pastor.

But this text is not really telling us to think like Jesus is it? St. Paul is comforting the people of Philippi with the sure and certain power of the gift they already have received. When you were made a child of God, you were connected to Christ! You were made his brother or his sister. You have inherited all the power and honor of

the family of God. If you were a member of the Gates family, the Microsoft Billionaire, and you were living a scummy life, Bill might come to you and say, "You need to act like a Gates!" What would he be saying by that? He would not be saying that you are no longer rich or powerful or part of the family. He would be saying that the choices you are making are not choices that are worthy of being a Gates. That's exactly what St. Paul is saying in this text.

You have been connected to God's family. You are not just connected like a shirt-tail relative who fell into a lucky marriage. You have been chosen and given "the mind of Christ." You are adopted as sons and daughters. It was a legal arrangement in which the Messiah gave his life and soul in payment for your life and soul. By legal decree, you were adopted into the family. So, St. Paul is not saying that if you are holy and righteous and make all the right choices, then you can have the mind of Christ. He is saying that Christ, "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Because of that, you now have the mind of Christ along with His name and His inheritance.

You are no longer under the yoke of sin. You have been freed to be the children of God, so enjoy it!

Of course, this makes a huge difference in the way we live because everything is different for us as part of the Royal Family. There are things we could do, but choose not to do because everything we do reflects on our Father's name. There are things we are willing to sacrifice in this world because we know that we will soon enter the amazing life that has been purchased for us by our brother. That is why Christians can happily give up hours of their week and thousands of their dollars to serve the Church. We know that nothing we have in this life matters compared to the life that is coming to us and we strive to use all of our resources to bring this good news to all who do not know or those who once knew but have forgotten. We strive to use the Word to increase the faith of all who are part of the family, especially those who are still living as though they are trapped under the law.

Today is the day we usually confirm our youth who are asking to be confirmed. Sadly, this year, because of the virus, we do not have any who were able to complete their studies. Next Spring, we will have a double crop! But nonetheless, I want to talk about what confirmation is. This is not just a silly rite we go through. This is a watershed moment in your life. On whatever day she chooses to do

so, the Church confirms the faith of the believers who wish their faith to be confirmed. That is to say, you and I, as representatives of the Holy Catholic Church on earth, listen to their confessions of faith in God and we say "Amen!"

Up until confirmation, the Church looks to the parents to take care of the faith of the children. We offer help for the parents in the way of cradle roll, Sunday School classes, Bible studies and Vacation Bible School, but it is all on the parents to feed their children's' faith. Parents first bring their children forward for Holy Baptism and then follow that up with Christian education both in their home and here, at church. But on confirmation day, we the Church confirm the faith of these children and they take responsibility for their own faith. You know that faith that is not fed will die. Faith must be fed with God's Word and his Sacraments in order to thrive.

At confirmation, we have done our best to train the person to care for his or her own faith. We have taught them to read the Bible and made it possible for them to receive the Sacrament. But our work is not done until that person becomes a viable member of the body. Too often we see our confirmands walk out of this place on Confirmation Sunday never to be heard from again. We are on the hook for that. Once we confirm them, they become our

responsibility. And at that time in their lives, they need us more than ever.

People in high school and college are perhaps more tempted than anyone else to forget that they have the mind of Christ. Satan knows that he has a brief window when their faith is young and tender but their parents are losing control of them. He will happily use that window in time to pull them away from God. He will pull them away with jobs that demand they be there on Sunday. He will pull them away with sports that practice and play on Sunday. He will convince them that homework and grades are more important than youth group and Bible study. He will use anything he can to get between them and the Word in hopes that they will forget that they have the mind of Christ.

Do not forget. And take it upon yourself to be certain that no one else forgets either. We have the mind of Christ. We have the ability to overcome every obstacle and laugh in the face of opposition. It has been given us free of charge. All we have to do is feed our faith with Word and Sacrament so that our faith strongly grasps the gift of Grace and we are set for a life of joy and peace until our eternal life begins.