

St. Mary Mother of Our Lord – August 9, 2015

Text: Galatians 4:4-7

Theme: "You Ought Not To Be Ashamed of Yourself"

**Shame and guilt are interesting concepts. We tend to associate shame and guilt with how we feel about something we do or something others do. I "feel" ashamed of myself because I received too much change at McDonalds and I kept it instead of telling the clerk. I "feel" guilty because I give too little to the church compared with the blessings God gives me. Isaiah wrote in our Old Testament reading,**

**"Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy." He did not mean shame in the way we think of shame. In our Western society, we think of guilt and shame as feelings we have when we have done something that we perceive is wrong or our society perceives is wrong. The Eastern world did not and does not think in such ways. For industrialized Westerners guilt and shame own the day but in the East, guilt is an objective statement and shame is a byproduct of dishonor. In the East, honor is what matters. What you do as an individual is only wrong if you are judged guilty by authorities and that brings dishonor on your family and therefore shame. A person with a truly Eastern identity could drive down the Eisenhower, stinking drunk at 100 miles per hour and so long as he**

**didn't get caught, he would feel absolutely no guilt or shame whatsoever. Guilt, for him, is not a feeling. Guilt is an objective declaration from the authorities in a society. If, on the other hand, he were arrested and found guilty by a court, then he would be shamed because he brought dishonor upon his family. This would be a horrible thing not because of the way he feels, but because it is dishonorable.**

**Mary, the Mother of Our Lord, was very Eastern. When she found herself pregnant out of wedlock, there was no concern about feeling ashamed or feeling guilty, but rather concern about how society might dishonor her family. Obviously, no one was going to believe the whole Immaculate Conception deal, so her family would be dishonored and Joseph would surely leave her. She knew right then and there that she would have to live under that blanket of shame for the rest of her life. There is no coming back from that kind of shame, which is why it was not and is not unusual for shamed people in certain Eastern societies to kill themselves.**

**Likewise the people of God in Isaiah's day lived under a blanket of shame. They had fooled around with idols and gotten caught, judged and exiled by God. They had been judged unworthy to have the Promised Land that had been given to their ancestors, and they were sent into Babylon. It is not that they felt bad about themselves, or had low self-esteem because of what they did. It is**

**simply that they were declared guilty by God and therefore dishonored. They were shamed because they had been dishonored for their wrongdoing. That is why the words of Isaiah were so powerful for them. Not only was God lifting their shame but he was giving them a double portion. He wasn't just saying, "There, there, it will all be ok," while patting them on the collective head. He reversing the judgement, removing the dishonor and setting them higher than where they were before they fell. This could only come by divine gift. It is the only way their dishonor could be alleviated, to be divinely raised in status and given a double portion.**

**Paul explained it all to the Galatians in our reading from his epistle today. When God determined that the time was right, he took all the guilt of sin and placed it on his son, Jesus Christ so that we are not dishonored but he was dishonored for us. Jesus bore the dishonor of the entire world and having been born, it is over. You cannot "feel" guilty for your sin because guilt is not a feeling! Guilt is a legal declaration that was made against Jesus. It was applied to Jesus and that is why he was crucified and damned. Jesus, not to you. And you cannot "feel" ashamed of yourselves because the dishonor has been lifted. You would be shamed if you were under the Law because you failed to keep the Law. Therefore you would be judged guilty, dishonored and therefore shamed. But our punishment was given to Jesus and he paid the price for us. We**

**therefore cannot “feel” ashamed because there is no shame for us to “feel.”**

**This is a game changer. We, in the individualistic West are so egocentric that we have a hard time getting outside ourselves and seeing that salvation has absolutely nothing to do with how we “feel” about ourselves or anything else. This is why I loathe emotion based worship and music. That only encourages us to think of salvation as an emotional experience, a feeling, warm, sappy, goo of cotton candy and unicorns. That is not what salvation is. It is a legal statement of our complete pardon for all crimes against God and humanity. If we feel ashamed or if we feel guilty, it is because we are producing those feelings. Why would someone do that? I don’t get it but I think we secretly like the drama of it all. If you don’t like what you’re doing or you don’t like the societal consequences for what you are doing, THEN STOP DOING IT! But don’t try to make it into a feeling. Don’t try to divert the fact that you cheapen Christ’s death on the cross with your blatant sin by trying to add the drama of guilt and shame to the mix. Your forgiveness is a legal fact. The guilt is reversed. The dishonor has been lifted. There can be no shame. Now live your lives in the freedom he bought for you with his own life and soul and stop being dramatic about that which is an objective reality.**