

The Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

(Year C)

<i>First Reading</i>	1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23
<i>Response</i>	The Lord is merciful and gracious
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13
<i>Second Reading</i>	1 Corinthians 15:45-49
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 6:27-38

The seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time continues our journey through 1 Corinthians, and we are still in chapter 15. There's just so much in this monumental, climactic chapter to Paul's first letter to Corinth. And here the Church is giving us a selection from 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.

And this once again is about eschatology, the doctrine of the end of time and its focus on the relationship between Adam and Christ in a very famous passage about Christ as the last Adam. So let's hear what Paul has to say — 1 Corinthians 15:45 says:

Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.¹

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

Powerful, beautiful passage. Okay, what's going on in this particular text? Well, this is a classic example of what scholars — modern scholars — refer to as typology, the study of Old Testament types and their New Testament fulfillments. Looking at Old Testament figures and events and realities that point forward to or typify — they are like prototypes, for example — of New Testament fulfillments, usually centered on Christ. He's usually the fulfillment of every person, event, or reality of the Old Testament — although there will be some other fulfillments. You'll have typology for Mary, typology for John the Baptist. Mary's the new Eve; she's the new ark. John the Baptist is the new Elijah... and that kind of thing. Normally, it's all focused on Christ.

And in this case, the typology is between Adam and Jesus. So what Paul is doing here is describing Jesus in somewhat different terms than we might ordinarily be accustomed to. So for example, in my own experience growing up as a Catholic, if you ask me, "Who is Jesus?" I'd probably say something like... or I might choose one from several options: "Jesus is God" or "Jesus is the Son of God" or "Jesus is the Messiah" or "Jesus is the king of the Jews, the king of Israel" — whatever it might be.

What I tend *not* to say right off the bat as my first impulse is: "Jesus is the last Adam." But that's what St. Paul says here in 1 Corinthians 15.

So what does it mean in terms of Christ's identity and His mission, to refer to Him as the last Adam? Well, to answer that question, it's helpful to kind of contrast it with the other title. So for example, when we call Jesus "the Messiah", we're saying that He's the anointed king of Israel, focusing on His identity and His mission as king, who comes to bring about the kingdom of God on Earth.

When we call Jesus "the Savior", we tend to focus on His identity as the suffering servant who offers His life for the salvation of others, in order to atone for sin and reconcile humanity with God. But when we call Christ the last Adam — or should I say, when Paul refers to Him as the last Adam — which by the way, in Greek is *ho eschatos Adam*, the eschatological Adam. That's what Paul is literally saying here. Here Paul is emphasizing on Jesus' role as the one who is going to restore creation, as the one who inaugurates a new creation, as the one who liberates fallen

humanity from Original Sin — the sin of Adam and all of its effects... namely, suffering, sin, and death.

So in other words, when Paul calls Christ the last Adam, he's emphasizing the cosmic nature of redemption and the cosmic impact of Jesus' coming into the world, dying on the cross, and being raised on the third day.

So in that context, what Paul does is he draws a series of contrasts between the old Adam and the new Adam. So let's just walk through those and kind of look at what they are.

So okay, first thing is he calls Adam (from the book of Genesis) the first man Adam ... literally *ho prōtos anthrōpos Adam*. So he's the prototype — literally here — he's the prototypical man. He's the first man, whereas Jesus is called *ho eschatos Adam* — the eschatological Adam, the last Adam.

So although Christ as a human being receives His human nature from Adam, He's in some way going to be the end of an old world, the end of the old humanity, the end of the old creation, and the beginning of something new.

Second, Paul refers to the first Adam as a living soul — *psychē* is the Greek word. We get psychology from that, study of the soul. We think of it as the study of the mind; it's the Greek word is *psychē*. Whereas Christ, he says, is a life giving spirit. The Greek word there is *pneuma*, same word as for Holy Spirit.

Now this is really, really important to emphasize. When Paul says Adam is a living soul but Christ is a life-giving spirit, he doesn't mean that Adam had a body and Jesus didn't, that Jesus is just a ghost; He's a pure spirit. That's not what he's doing. What he's doing is he's contrasting the animating and life-giving principle of Adam — which was his human soul, a natural principle, part of the old creation — with the animating and life-giving principle of Christ that is the Holy Spirit. And it doesn't mean that Christ doesn't have a human soul. He does. He's fully human — Paul will say that elsewhere, like in Philippians 2:

... but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:7)

So that is elsewhere in Paul stated, but here what Paul is getting at is that the risen Christ as new Adam, is actually anointed by, suffused with, the Spirit of God. Think about Christ's very identity as *christos*, as Christ, means that He's anointed. He's the Anointed One. Well, what is He anointed with? He's anointed with the *pneuma*, with the Spirit of God.

So he's drawing contrasts here — we'll see this a little bit later — between basically what we might call the natural and supernatural principles of life. And it's very important for him to make clear to the Corinthians that as the new Adam, Christ is coming into the world not just to reunite the human soul with the human body, but to transfigure humanity itself through the power and the eternal life that will be given by the Spirit.

A third contrast: he says that the old Adam is from the Earth, and the new Adam is from Heaven. Now once again, this does *not* mean that Jesus didn't have a body — that goes back to the origin of the Adamic nature, when God makes Adam from the dust of the Earth. But he's drawing a contrast here between Adam, who is a merely human being, who was created in this world, who has its origin in *this* world — when God takes (Genesis 2) the dust of the Earth and breathes into it and gives it life. He's contrasting that with Christ, who although He has a fully human nature, ultimately has His origins in Heaven, because He is the eternal Son. He is the divine Son of God who comes down from Heaven and assumes a human nature in order to live among us.

Alright, so it's talking about their origin — different origin. And the point he's making in saying that is to emphasize that as just as we bear the image of the earthly Adam who is from the dust of the ground and who is of this Earth, so too now that we've been baptized and through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we bear the image of Christ who is the man of Heaven, who is the last Adam.

It's actually interesting here... in that verse, Paul says, verse 48:

As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven.

Literally in Greek, what he says is “so are the heavenlies” or “the heavenly one.” So one of Paul’s names for Christians is the heavenly ones, because as he’ll say in the letter to the Philippians, although we live here on Earth:

... our commonwealth is in heaven...

Literally in Greek, our *politeia*, our politics — heavenly politics, how ironic. There’s nothing more paradoxical than the idea of heavenly politics, but that’s actually what Paul is saying. Because he’s saying our *polis*, our city, our homeland, our home city is not of this world but is of heaven. Why? Because through Baptism we become members of the Mystical Body of Christ, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12. And where does the risen Christ reign? Where is His Body? It’s not on Earth anymore. Through His Ascension, it is in Heaven. He sits at the right hand of the Father.

So Paul here is trying to do is help the Corinthians, in a sense, try to understand — try to wrap their brains around — the mystery of not just the bodily resurrection, which he deals with earlier in the chapter (the truth of the resurrection)... but actually the nature of the resurrected body and helping them to see that as the new Adam, Christ doesn’t just come into the world to save them from sin. He comes in the world to save them *for* a new world, to save them *for* the resurrection... to inaugurate as the first fruits of the resurrection, the beginning of a transfigured life in which not just their souls (that they receive from Adam) are going to be made right and reconciled with God, but their very bodies will be changed so that they will be of heavenly origin and they will be enabled to, in a sense — how should we say it? — participate in the heavenly glory of the resurrection at the end of time that Christ already participates in now, in the middle of time, as He’s seated at the right hand of the Father in His glorified and resurrected state.

In other words, for Paul and 1 Corinthians 15, he’s trying to get the Corinthians to see that salvation isn’t just about human beings. It’s cosmic. Just as Adam’s sin brought suffering and death into the world — the cosmos — so too Christ’s

suffering, death, and resurrection as the new Adam isn't just going to restore humanity. It's going to restore the entire cosmos. It'll restore all of creation, so that human bodies in the resurrection are going to be different than they are in this fallen world.

And you don't have to listen to me — you can listen to St. Augustine. So in his famous work *The City of God*, Augustine says this in his commentary on this short passage from 1 Corinthians 15:

First comes in the natural body such as Adam was the first man to possess. Had he not sinned, he would never have died. Such a body we too possess, except that its nature as a result of sin has become so changed for the worse that it is now faced with inexorable death. Such a body Christ also deigned to assume for our sakes, not indeed by necessity but in virtue of his power. Afterward, however, comes the spiritual body such as that which Christ, our head, was the first to have been, but which we his members, will have at the final resurrection of the dead.²

That's from *City of God* 13, paragraph 23. So in other words, when Paul says that we are going to bear the image of the man from Heaven, just as we bore the image of the man from Earth, what he means is, that if you want to understand what your resurrected body will be like at the end of time, then you need to look carefully at the nature of Christ's resurrected body. Because as the last Adam, He, in a sense, inaugurates a new creation in which we will participate not just through the immortality of our souls, but through the resurrection and glorification of our bodies... so that our bodies will be just as real and just as suffused with the power of the Spirit as Christ's resurrected body was on Easter Sunday. And that is indeed Good News.

² Augustine, *City of God*, 13.23; trans. in G. Bray, 1-2 Corinthians 175