

God's Love for Sinners (3rd Sunday of Lent, Year A)

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8—Christ Died For Love of Us

¹ Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have obtained access *to this grace in which we stand*, and *we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God*. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and *hope does not disappoint us*, because *God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*. ⁶ While we were still weak, at the right time *Christ died for the ungodly*. ⁷ Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. ⁸ But *God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*. (Romans 5:1-2, 5-8)

1. Grace: not just a “gift” (Greek *charis*); a *state* in which we “stand” (Rom 5:2)
2. Hope: of sharing in God’s “glory” (in the resurrection) (Rom 5:2)
3. Love: God’s “love” (Greek *agapē*)
4. Baptism: has been “poured into our hearts” through “the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5)
5. Ungodly: “impious” or “irreverent” (Greek *asebeia*) (Rom 5:5)

The Living Tradition

John Chrysostom: *If then He hath brought us near to Himself, when we were far off, much more will He keep us now that we are near....* What grace is this? tell me. It is the being counted worthy of the knowledge of God, the being forced from error, the coming to a knowledge of the Truth, the obtaining of all the blessings that come through Baptism. For the end of His bringing us near was that we might receive these gifts. For it was not only that we might have simple remission of sins, that we were reconciled; but that we might receive also countless benefits. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 9; trans. NPNF 11.396)

Catechism: God “shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” [Rom 5:8]... He affirms that he came “to give his life as a ransom for many”; this last term is not restrictive, but contrasts the whole of humanity with the unique person of the redeemer who hands himself over to save us. The Church, following the apostles, teaches that *Christ died for all men without exception*: “*There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer.*” (CCC 604-605)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (3rd Sunday of Lent, Year A)

1. Where does the Church get the language of a “state of grace” (cf. CCC 1861)? How does this relate to Paul’s use of the word in Romans 5?

2. How does the crucifixion of Jesus reveal the depths of God’s love for us?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 11 (ed. Philip Schaff; repr.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994).