

Paul and the Salvation of Israel (20th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Romans 11:13-15, 29-32—Paul and the Salvation of Israel

¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am *an apostle to the Gentiles*, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ *in order to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.* ¹⁵ *For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?* ... ²⁹ *For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.* ³⁰ Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹ so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. ³² For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all. (Romans 11:13-15, 29-32)

1. Apostle to the Gentiles:

[W]hen they saw that I had been entrusted with *the gospel to the uncircumcised*, just as Peter had been entrusted with *the gospel to the circumcised* ⁸ (*for he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles*), ⁹ ... James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, *that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised*... (Galatians 2:7-9)

2. Paul's Universal Mission:

²⁰ *To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law.* ²¹ *To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law.* ²² *To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some...* (1 Corinthians 9:19-22)

The Living Tradition

Thomas Aquinas: [G]entiles are the believers who will grow lukewarm [Matt 24:12]... or will fall away entirely, being deceived by the Antichrist. These will be restored to their primitive fervor after the conversion of the Jews... [A]fter the conversion of the Jews, the end of the world being then imminent, there will be a general resurrection, through which men will return from the dead to immortal life. (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Romans* no. 890)

Catechism: *The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until his recognition by "all Israel"...* "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the

world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?” The “full inclusion” of the Jews in the Messiah’s salvation, in the wake of “the full number of the Gentiles,” will enable the People of God to achieve “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” in which “God may be all in all.” (CCC 674)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (20th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. What does it mean for Paul to refer to himself as an “apostle to the Gentiles”?

2. What does the *Catechism* teach about the recognition of Christ by “all Israel” before the Final Advent?

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).