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New Hope for Everyone The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls Day)
Monday, November 2, 2015 8:15 AM **Wis 3:1-9; Rom 5:5-11; Jn 6:37-40**
(Salvation is on the last day, but we can anticipate and enjoy even now all kinds of blessings, the first one being, according to St. Paul, hope itself.)

“For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day.”

Again, this is reflecting the idea that I have been talking about from the Letter to the Romans that **salvation is on the last day, at the end of time**. But meanwhile **we are already called to be saints; we are justified by faith, and we live a new life**. It’s just not the totality of salvation; you could say **it’s just the foretaste, the hors d’oeuvre of salvation**.

In reading these three readings today, we see the contrast between the Old and New. The first reading from the Book of Wisdom is not technically the Old Testament in the Jewish sense of the Bible, the Jewish Bible. It is in the Old Testament of the Catholic Church, but is not part of the canon of the Jews, of the rabbis; and therefore it’s not in the Protestant Bible either. The Protestant reformers trusted the Jewish rabbis more than the Catholic Church in determining what was inspired word of God. That itself is rather peculiar, but that’s history.

So the Book of Wisdom is part of the Catholic canon of Scripture because the Catholic Church arose from the Jewish diaspora; that means the Jews scattered throughout the Roman Empire, **not the Jews living in Palestine**. The Jews in Judea were not the beginning of the Catholic Church. **The Catholic Church was formed by communities outside of Palestine called the diaspora**. And those diaspora Jews **had the Book of Wisdom and many other books**. Sometimes they are called the **deuterocanonical books**, the secondary canon, because even some of the Fathers argued about that. They said, well, we shouldn’t really have these books because they are really not approved by the Palestinian Jews. But we do have them.

But it reflects something very different from the New Testament. So it’s not technically Judaism, but it’s not technically the New Testament either. It’s in between. **It talks about how the mercy of God is available to those who are holy**. Whereas St. Paul makes it very clear the mercy of God is available to the wicked, to the “ungodly,” he says. That’s a big difference. I’m not sure that a lot of Christians really understand **the message of St. Paul, that God’s intention is really to save the wicked, as well as the just** of course. This is why preaching the gospel is so crucial to the transformation of the world because **people have to really know that there is a**

new chance available for them. People sooner or later experience the weight, the gravity, of **their own sinfulness and the sinfulness of others.** To what degree this sinfulness is really something freely chosen, that is beyond our capacity to tell. Only God can know that type of thing.

But that we bear the burden of it, the weight of it, the gravity of it, that is obvious. **Every single family has brokenness in it.** Every single marriage has bruises. Every single person's life has problems, challenges, and failures—in short, brokenness. That is the world we live in. The good news says **there is a new chance available to everyone for new life.** And it will only be totally satisfied on the last day, but meanwhile we can make a great deal of progress toward this last day. **We can anticipate and enjoy even now all kinds of blessings, the first one being, according to St. Paul, hope itself.**

To live with hope is very different from living without it. It's an immense difference. And the **gospel brings hope to the world.** In a way, that's almost first before faith. Of course you have to have faith to preach, but you bring hope first, and then people come to believe. In a way, this is only possible because **human beings are fashioned to hope for something.** If human beings were not fashioned to hope for something, then the gospel would have nowhere to go. There would be no ears listening. There would be no hearts waiting, but there are because we are fashioned to want something better, to look for something more human and lovely because we are created for love; even if we don't believe it, we are created for it. So in its absence we feel something missing, **although we may not know what it is.**

So that is the Christian belief that there is new hope for everyone, for the wicked, for the depraved. And there are a lot of wicked, depraved people in the world today. Just think of those people **exploiting all those refugees.** Why is there this wave of refugees leaving Syria? The war has been going on for years. Why now the wave of refugees? Because someone is exploiting them, taking their money and moving them to the west. Notice they are not moving them to the north or to the south, where there are all these wealthy Arab states that could well take care of the people of the Islamic tradition. They don't go there or to the east either. They go to the west. This is all part of a great scheme of schemers, criminals, **cruel criminals; but God wants to even save them.** That's this extraordinary message that St. Paul is talking about in this fifth chapter of Romans. It's good for us to think about it and pray about it.