

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Ransom the World Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God Octave Day of Christmas
Monday, January 1, 2018 8:15 AM Nm 6:22-27; **Gal 4:4-7**; Lk 2:16-21 (God is willing to give up his own very self now incarnate in the flesh.)

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

At times a certain word just jumps out, and today what jumps out in my mind is the word “ransom.” What possibly could it mean? **Ordinarily ransom is paid to kidnappers.** There is a story now in the cinemas, I haven’t seen it, I haven’t been to a movie in about a year or two, but there is a movie about J Paul Getty, one of the richest men ever whose favorite grandson was kidnapped, and he wouldn’t pay one penny for ransom. In other words, he was a tightwad.

This idea of ransoming here is a little problematic because to whom would this ransom be paid—that’s a problem. Well to no one in particular. We have to get over that problem to realize what it really means and that is that, unlike J Paul Getty, who wouldn’t give a penny to ransom his very favorite grandson, **God in contrast was willing to send his own very Son in the flesh to ransom people who had no use for him, people who are wicked, indifferent, malicious.** That is the depth of God’s love, and that’s what Paul is getting at.

And he reflects what is also said in the Fourth Gospel: **“God so loved the world.”** Now the “world” has a lot of different meanings, *kosmos* in Greek. It could mean the entire universe. But you have to look at how the word “world” is used in the Fourth Gospel. It’s usually in a very negative way. It’s not the creation as a thing of beauty. It could be used that way, but not usually **in the Fourth Gospel** when it says, “God so loved the world,” **that world is usually the place of darkness, the place of evil, the place mostly of selfishness and violence.** And the point is God so loved the world, this place of selfishness, that he wanted to redeem it, that is after all his creation, although he has given it this attribute of freedom and so he could not control where it

went, chose not to control where it went, wanted it to have this freedom, **wanted it to have this autonomy, if you will, but then was very saddened by the results.** This is recorded already in the Book of Genesis how sad God was at the results of the creation. It says he “repented of his creation”; that means in this case thought better of it because of the “violence of the flesh.”

But nonetheless **he wanted to bring it back to the great potential he created in it for love and communion,** not only with God obviously, but also with itself. That is the actual plan which Jesus calls the “kingdom of God” or the “kingdom of heaven.” It is this unity, this communion **of peace and well-being that is rooted in people’s willingness to obey God, to live in God, to let God be their guide and director,** and not to write the scenario of their own lives, but to let God write the scenario. And in order to accomplish that **God is willing to give up his own very self now incarnate in the flesh.** Why? To demonstrate what love really is, its real power. The love of God therefore is the love that is given away, poured out in order to enable that very love to spread.