

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

The Power of the Cross Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time Friday, August 31, 2018
1 Cor 17-25; Mt 25:1-13 (Healing Mass) (When we are full of ourselves, well then there's no room for God. So the cross is the place where we become totally empty and God can fill us.)

“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

This is actually a very profound statement to refer to the cross as the power of God, not obviously; it's not obviously the power of God. It seems to be the power of violence, the power of men. It seems to be the power of weapons. It seems to be “might makes right.” But of course the cross does not stand all by itself; the cross yields to the resurrection. And so **we always have to understand the cross and the resurrection of Christ as one event that reveals to us, that discloses to us, God's plan for our future.**

Now this text here says, “Jews demand signs,” well not only Jews. **Lots of people demand signs.** That means we want God to prove himself. If only God proves himself, then we will believe. That's actually the mentality of a lot of people in the world. **Jesus' view is if you purify your heart, you will see God everywhere.** “Blessed are the pure of heart, they shall see God.” They shall see God everywhere because God is everywhere and permeating everything, creating everything, sustaining everything, and we dwell in God. **This becomes more and more clear the more and more we are purified of our egoism, our pridefulness, our self-importance, our self-centeredness.**

So Paul says, “The Greeks demand wisdom,” and that's not bad. Wisdom is good. But they never got very far because human reason alone can't really know much. **Human reason is the capacity to learn, but on its own it can't learn that much.** It could learn a lot about the world through the senses, but it can't put it all together. That is what revelation is about. That is what

God's disclosure of himself is about. That's why Jesus came so that we would not have to figure it out, because we can't figure it out. We can figure out some things, but not the whole. **The totality of reality is beyond us. Jesus is the totality of God's divine mind incarnate, embodied, so that when we get to know Jesus we get to know the mind of God.** That's why St. Paul says, "**Put on the mind of Christ.**" Putting on the mind of Christ is not something we do like putting on a shirt or a hat, but **it means working with the Spirit of God and letting the Spirit of God bring us enlightenment, illumination, truth.**

St. Paul is getting at this idea that **it is the cross that is the way we get this, by seeing the cross as a gift.** Jesus is giving himself totally, holding nothing back. His whole life was giving himself, pouring himself out. The cross was simply the final stage of his outpouring of his life. And when we make ourselves completely empty, then God can come in. **When we are full of ourselves, well then there's no room for God. So the cross is the place where we become totally empty and God can fill us.**

Now on one hand you could say the cross is a moment in time many centuries ago in a certain place, yes, that's true. But **the cross is also ever-present in the Eucharist, because the Eucharist is done in memory of Christ. So his gift of himself is available in the Eucharist.** The very blood that flowed from his side is in the chalice by the miraculous power of God. So that just as our existence itself is a complete miracle, unexplainable in any way, **so now we are enveloped in the love of God in a way that is utterly miraculous and unexplainable.** And in another sense the cross of Christ and the blood of Christ exists in that heavenly exalted place where Jesus Christ is the true high priest, who intercedes for us in a timeless way. **He is the eternal priest, the mediator, and he is always praying for us.**

Now some human beings get wrong ideas and they call it faith, but it's really superstition. One of them is, well, if I do everything right, if I'm a believer and I follow the rules and I read the Bible and I pray every day, then I will be protected. Well, Jesus himself said, "The disciple is not greater than his master." **If we are disciples of Jesus and Jesus was not protected from all the evil in the world, then we will not be protected from all the evil in the world.** God will be with us, but we will have to learn actually just what Jesus learned: **how to trust, how to let go, how to really depend upon God.** Now this may seem like foolishness to human reason, but it's actually the wisdom of God.

A man told me recently that his wife joined a church, a non-Catholic church, and I'm not saying that they taught her this at that church, but it's what she more or less figured out. *that* She said the reason why there was an earthquake in Mexico is the Mexicans don't really worship God, they worship Mary. Now believing in a God that would cause earthquakes in order to punish people for honoring the Mother of God, that itself is a very strange idea. It's the **superstition**, but it is born of the **belief that there's something we can do to protect us, and they think that's what faith is all about.** It's about protecting us. It's about becoming special.

Well, **the resurrection is God's promise that we will rise with him and reign with him forever if we are faithful, but it is not a promise that we won't suffer on earth.** We have to realize that **our sufferings are part of God's plan.** Now some saints carry this too far. Rose of Lima for example says if people only knew how God can bless them when they suffer, they would seek out every kind of infirmity and affliction and torment. Well, in my opinion that's going too far. I don't think we have to seek those things out. She might have been kidding. She might have been exaggerating on purpose, I don't know. But we know we don't have to look for or seek affliction. We don't have to seek **pain or suffering or infirmity.** These realities come to

us, and they **come to all of us at some point in our lives.** The point that St. Paul wants to make here is **it is through the cross that these weaknesses become strengths,** as our vulnerable, broken humanity is married to and starts to grow from the glorious divinity of Christ. That's the exchange. That's what he has inaugurated.

We come tonight to the Eucharist to eat his body and drink his blood to be filled with his Holy Spirit so that through our many different levels and forms of suffering and pain and affliction we can find the power of the cross.