

This evening's reading from Galatians shares with us Paul's reflection on God sending his Son in the context of his larger theological argument of what it means to be children of God and co-heirs to an eternity in Heaven with Christ. Paul expounds for us what exactly it means to be an heir. He highlights firstly that Heirs while being heirs are still minors. They are no better than slaves. And the Galatians have been enslaved for sometime. Before they knew God they "were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods."¹ However, they are no longer slaves, for not only have they come to know God, but God has come to know them and call them his beloved adopted sons and daughters by virtue of the Incarnation. By virtue of delivering from the law those who were subject to it. Yet for the Galatians, Paul is a little nervous, for they keep "observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years"² which were probably still parts of the Jewish liturgical calendar and not in Christian practice.

Thus Paul reminds them that Jesus, the Son of God being born of a woman under the Mosaic law comes to fulfill the law. God enters once more into the human love story as he Incarnates Himself within our midst to save us, redeem us, and in doing so to fulfill the law of the Old Covenant as he ushers in the new reign of the kingdom of God. However our passage this evening cuts off the sixth verse, wherein

¹ Galatians 4:8

² Galatians 4:10

Paul says, “and because you are sons (children), God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out ‘Abba! Father!’³ Abba. That’s such an intimate name for an intimate God. And it’s a bit of a shame we missed it tonight in the reading.

Intimacy with God. That’s why God sent His Son out of love into the world. Because God desires to be intimately involved in the life of His people. Where Adam and Eve once walked with God in the garden, God now walks again through His creation in the person of His Son. In the faith of His people. It’s no secret that God desires intimacy with His creation. He takes delight in it. He sees in it the good that creation fails to recognize within itself. And it’s no secret then that he desires to woo man’s heart to Himself and thus uses all of creation to reach out, calling and inviting his beloved children to come home.

Intimacy with God isn’t something that is new to this community. For you my dear sisters have a privileged seat of intimacy with the Lord. A privileged seat with our Blessed Mother at God’s most vulnerable and intimate moment with His creation. Here at Calvary, here gathered as you are always at the Foot of the Cross, uniting yourselves with the Heart of His Sorrowful Mother, each of you are intimately present to the Lord. Present as the God who formed you and called you His beloved children allows His Son, His child, His beloved to be killed by his other children. You are present to God as he cries out in anguish from the tree, the iron nails piercing His

³ Galatians 4:6, cf. Ability to use the intimate language through the Spirit that Christ used for God in Mark 14:36, and Romans 8:15-17

Sacred Flesh, his beating heart full of love, beating, pumping, pouring out his life-giving blood as a cleansing bath to the dry plague of sin and selfishness that stains our world.

Yes. Here at the foot of the Cross, you dear sisters are daily present to our Lord in His suffering...in His anguish...in His love. You like His Blessed Mother ponder the Mysteries of our Redemption Firsthand and give comfort through the tears. Give strength through the weakness of his Human body. Give voice to love and truth through the cries of his anguish. Your lives exist here at the foot of the Cross for intimacy. For love...So that the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ might be remembered, might be lovingly recalled, and kept always in our hearts.

God sent His Son so that we might be intimately connected once more to Him, redeemed as His beloved sons and daughters. Yet a little closer to Home in this time of Salvation History, God sent you my dear sisters so that we the priests and lay faithful of the Diocese of Owensboro, and indeed of the world might be more intimately connected to God through your prayerful witness and example.

75 years of sitting at the Foot of the Cross in the Owensboro Diocese. 50 years of giving witness on Benita Avenue until that first Monastery grew too small and the city too loud and now 25 years gracing the booming metropolis of Whitesville with your prayerful presence and cloistered witness. There is a lot to celebrate on this day of your Foundation, but it wouldn't have been possible without God calling His creation into deeper intimacy with Him. Calling them beloved sons and daughters.

Calling those first five sisters from Pennsylvania, his beloved daughters of the Passion to Owensboro to live a life here of intimacy with the Lord. United in His Passion and suffering, bearing witness to His redemptive work, that 1946 cross country trek to the rolling Hills of Western Kentucky wouldn't have been possible without the Spirit giving us the ability to call God, Abba, Father, to have an intimate life of prayer and devotion with Him.

Intimacy and a life of prayer with the Lord cannot stay in one place. It risks becoming stagnant if the pond of love doesn't receive the fresh flowing waters of wisdom and grace. And as you know, as one grows in intimacy with Him, Christ always asks more of us. He wants all of us, holding nothing back. And for his closest friends, Christ tends to take them on a wild journey of trust and faith, but always rooted in Himself. From Mother Mary Agnes sending letters back and forth to a new Bishop in a Missionary Diocese asking about starting a foundation, how to find linens, refrigerators, the need for wood to build prayer benches and beds to be made, the new journey of trust and faith for this community surely must have been an adventure. But when we stand on the precipice of the boat with Peter and see and hear as the Lord...as He calls our names from His hearty breakfast on the shore, I'd like to think that Christ waits with baited breath to see if we too will dive into the depths with Him, to reach out in Faith...to seek His love and mercy, to spread the Gospel, to set the world on fire with His love. Those first five sisters dived into the depths with the Lord and Bishop Cotton 75 years ago, then this community dived

into the depths of a move to Whitesville, and now today dives once more into the depths of building and growing, of cherishing that flame of faith that has been handed on to us.

The flame of Christ's light burned bright in Scranton, it burned bright on Benita Ave. and it shines even more brightly now from this Monastery of Saint Joseph as a beacon to the world. As an example to the world that there is something worth living for, someone worth giving everything for, a flame of love worth cherishing within the walls of enclosure.

In Bishop Cotton's letter to Mother Mary Agnes of July 18th, 1946 the good Bishop wrote that, "There will be all sorts of little details to be worked out in connection with the foundation. But with God's help they will work out alright." By God's grace these details have worked out alright. With the powerful intercession of Saint Joseph, and the tear-filled witness of the Sorrowful Mother, the details of building and growing, of loving and laughing continue to work out alright as you dear sisters continue to grow in intimacy with the Lord as His beloved daughters here at Saint Joseph Monastery.

In a newspaper article covering the foundation of the Passionist Nuns here in the Diocese of Owensboro, Ann Riney wrote, "Now that we have put the nuns in their place, they'll remember us, they say, in their life of prayer and penance."

My dear sisters, we the priests and people of the Diocese of Owensboro give thanks with you this day before our Eucharistic King for the abundance of blessings

that He has bestowed on this Monastery and our Diocese since your foundation 75 years ago. And we beg you to continue here in this place set apart, this place of quiet retreat, this place of privileged intimacy at the Foot of the Cross to remember us often in your prayers and penance.

As you pray your daily rosary and office you give witness to the Victory of an eternity with Him, which our Lady promises that we will experience from Her Son if we too grow in relationship with Him through our prayer. As you stretch out your hands and embrace the cross, you embrace each of us in the Passion of our Lord, calling us to gather often with you at the Foot of His Cross...keeping His Saving Work as the center of our lives. Help us through your lives of prayer to conceal ourselves like you in Christ Jesus crucified.

Beloved daughters of the Most High, my dear Sisters, intimately connected to the Lord in his Passion here within this holy cloister. Hear how Saint Paul reminds us this day of our redemption...of the saving act of deliverance carried out by Christ upon the Altar of the Cross, making us God's beloved children. Cherish your divine daughtership always like Mary within your heart. For there in your heart as on Benita Ave. and here on Crisp Road the foundations of His love have been sown and are renewed each time you gather in His presence, gather at the Foot of the Cross to bear witness to His Redeeming Work and to grow in intimacy and prayer with Him. May the Lord always continue to bless this House he has established and built so that His Passion may be always within our hearts. Amen.