

## 15 February 2009 – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT B

### LESSON: Polishing Up God's Glory: Introduction

Confirmation is quickly approaching for our confirmation students. Very often, as part of their preparation, there is a small “quiz” to see if they know basic elements of the faith: the Gifts of the Spirit, the Apostles Creed, the Act of Contrition. One of the other prayers our Confirmation students often are asked to recite is one of the most common Catholic prayers: the “Glory Be” or *Gloria Patri*.

"Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen." We all remember that prayer, don't we?

Glory be to God – is our prayer – asking that, as it has always been, as it is now, and as it will be forever – may all Glory be given to God. This concept of giving glory to God is front and center at every Mass, right after we ask God pardon for our sins, when we sing: "Glory to God in the highest."

- ? We learn these prayers **early on** in our lives as Catholics, and we use them often.
- ? They are **so basic** to our Catholic faith, they must have a **deep and important meaning**.
- ? But in the midst of our busy lives, it's easy for us to fall into **routine** and **forget** about that.
- ? Every once in awhile, we need to **pause and polish up** some of our basic beliefs and practices, so that we don't lose sight of their **point**.

Today the Church gives us the chance to do **just that**,

- ? to reflect a little bit on the meaning of these prayers, of God's glory,
- ? to polish up our **appreciation** for some of the **profound truths** contained in this phrase,

and in that way not only to pray the prayers more **authentically**, but also to live them out more **joyfully**.

### Part I: The Context of Paul's Admonition

In today's Second Reading, St Paul tells us that "whether we eat or drink or whatever we do," we should "**do everything for the glory of God**."

As we've been doing, we need to understand the context – what's happening in Corinth that leads Saint Paul to give this admonition to “do everything for the glory of God”? Here, Saint Paul is encouraging the Christians of Corinth not to **offend each other** by ignoring other people's **sensibilities**.

- ? One of the problems for the new Christians in that ancient Greek city had to do with **dietary laws**.

- ? In pagan times, much - but not all - of the **meat** sold in butcher shops was connected to animals offered in **pagan sacrifices**.
- ? Of course, **Christians** didn't participate in those sacrifices, but they still needed to **buy meat**.
- ? Likewise, when a Christian was **invited to dinner** by a pagan, sometimes - but not always - the meat served had been **linked** to pagan sacrifices.
- ? The Christians didn't want to **offend their host** by refusing to eat, but they didn't want to **condone pagan sacrifices** either.

Earlier in the Letter, St Paul gave some **guidelines** for those situations.

- ? He said it was **OK** to buy meat in the shops and not ask all kinds of questions about which meats were connected to some false sacrifice, since it wasn't the **sacrifice** that the Christian was paying for.
- ? He also said it was **OK** to eat at a pagan's house without **interrogating** them about where they got their meat – after all, an interrogation like that would go against simple Christian **kindness and charity**.
- ? But he also said that if **another** Christian **anxiously** informed you that **this particular meat** had been part of a pagan sacrifice, you were to **abstain** from eating it, so as not to cause **extra conscience-problems** to another Christian.
- ? And in the passage we just listened to, he **sums up** all these guidelines by saying, "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do everything for the glory of God.**"
- ? God's glory, in other words, should be the **main goal** in everything we do, in **every decision** we have to make.

But what exactly **is** the glory of God, and **how** can we "do **everything**" for it?

## Part II: What Is the Glory of God?

There are two things we need to say about **what the glory of God is**.

First, the glory of God is the **reason** that God **created us redeemed us**.

- ? The Catechism of the Catholic Church says (293) that there is one fundamental truth about creation:
- ? "The world was made **for the glory of God.**"
- ? Now, if this was the **reason behind** God's creation and redemption of the universe, then whenever we make it the reason for **our** actions and decisions, we are uniting **our** deepest desires to **God's** deepest desires, which is the secret to **wisdom and happiness.**"

The **second** thing we can say about the glory of God is that it tells us that God was not just **seeking** glory by creating and redeeming us, but it tells us **what this glory really is**.

- ? Again, the Catechism says (#294), "the glory of God consists in the... **manifestation and communication of his goodness.**"
- ? In other words, to glorify God, to give glory to God, means to **experience his goodness** or to **help someone else** experience it.
- ? Let's take a **simple example**:
- ? Imagine that your mother makes the **best pumpkin rolls** in history.
- ? They are really, really, really good pumpkin rolls – absolutely **overflowing** with “delicious-ness.”
- ? When you taste those pumpkin rolls and **experience their goodness**, you are **glorifying**, in a sense, your **mother**.
- ? And when you **invite your friends** (or your parish priest) to experience the goodness of those pumpkin rolls, you are giving glory to your mother **even more**.
- ? Since, she is the **source** of all that goodness.
- ? But until we **taste** how good it is, we don't really **know** that.
- ? To "give her glory" is to **partake** of that goodness and to **make it known**.

Well, God's goodness is much, **much greater** than that, because it is **infinite** and the **ultimate source** of every other temporary goodness - even mom's pumpkin rolls.

God wanted to **share** His goodness with us, which is why He created us - for His glory, to allow us to **experience** His goodness.

So, when we say, "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," we are saying, "**may God's goodness be known and experienced by us and by everyone - more and more - forever and ever, amen!**"

That is why the "Glory be" is such a **beautiful** and **powerful** prayer - it points us **directly** towards the incredible adventure of everlasting life.

## Learning What Glory Means

In other words, the "glory of God" is God's wisdom and love and power made **visible**, made **knowable**; "giving God glory" is seeing, recognizing, and experiencing his love, greatness, and beauty.

I always remember when I was a kid – when we were outside with dad after a long summer day.

So often those late evening summer skies were **brilliant** colors of red and orange and even sometimes purple. It was beautiful.

I can still hear my dad saying to my brother and me, “Sons, look at that sunset! Who could possibly have made something as beautiful as that – except for God. Only God could have done that!” Then, we would pray together the *Gloria Patri*, “Glory be to the Father, and Son and Holy Spirit...”

Dad told us always to remember that beauty such as this is a gift from God to us, and that recognizing it was an opportunity to **give glory** to God."

### **Part III: How Do We Plug into God's Glory?**

In our daily lives, how do we come to **experience God's goodness**?

- ? Experiencing mom's pumpkin rolls is easy; we just have to take a bite.
- ? But how do we take a bite of God's goodness?
- ? The Catechism is helpful here, too.
- ? Quoting Saint Augustine, it reminds us that "the glory of God is **man fully alive**"
- ? In other words, by **living our human life to the full**, we experience God's goodness, giving him glory.
- ? This is why Jesus summed up his life mission by saying, "I came that they may have **life**, and have it **more abundantly!**" (John 10:10).
- ? **Sin and selfishness**, in every form, are **evil** precisely because they **hold us back** from experiencing life to the full, life as God **meant** for us to experience it.

This is why it is such an **amazing gift** to be a Catholic !

- ? Through the teachings and guidance of the **Church**, we can be **certain** that it is Christ who is teaching and guiding us away from all sin and evil.
- ? Through the **sacraments**, God gives us the **grace** we need to grow in **virtue** and **wisdom**, so that we can become **more fully alive** every day.
- ? This is why faithful Catholic **scientists**, for example, are not just **great scientists**, but they are also **more balanced and joyful** human beings.
- ? This is why faithful Catholic **politicians** are not just **better** politicians, but they are more at **peace** with themselves.
- ? This is why **faithful Catholic couples and families** are not just **stronger**, but **healthier and happier** too.
- ? The same goes for **every sector** of life.
- ? By **discovering and developing our talents** we are glorifying God, because he is the **origin** of those talents, and of our ability to develop and discover them.

Despite what our society and culture tell us, following Christ does **NOT** limit our human nature, it **maximizes** it!

The only **danger** is to **forget** that God is the **origin and goal** of all these wonderful things.

When we forget, we turn something into an **idol**, and it becomes **poison** for our souls and for the world around us.

So, how do we glorify God? By **living our lives to the full**, exactly as he meant them to be lived.

## Conclusion: Making Our Offering to God

In a few moments we will **bring our offerings** to God.

- ? These offerings **symbolize** that we recognize **all good things** have come to us from God, and that they **belong** to God, that they **reflect** his infinite goodness.
- ? By giving **some** of them back to God, we are **thanking** Him for **all** of them and showing that we don't want **any** of them to become an idol - we are **glorifying** him.
- ? It reminds me of the song I sang in the musical *Godspell* back in high school:
  - o All Good gifts around us – are sent from heaven above – then thank the Lord, then thank the Lord – for all His love...
- ? All of our offerings – all that we have, all that we are, are united in the **bread and wine** that will be placed on the altar - the bread symbolizing our **life and work**, the wine symbolizing our **joys and hopes**.
- ? Then, having offered all this to God together with Christ in the Eucharist, when we receive Holy Communion, God **gives these gifts back** to us, **transformed** into the **supernatural** reality of his divine body and blood.

Today as we live these **ancient, beautiful ceremonies** of the Mass, let's allow them to speak to us: reminding us that “All good gifts around us – come from heaven above.” Then will all that we have and all that we are really have the **meaning** that they are **supposed** to have, **glorifying God** by living our lives to the full – experiencing God’s goodness – recognizing that HE is the source of all that is good – and, as Saint Paul told the Corinthians, “doing everything for the glory of God” – not just for ourselves.