

Lent Devotional March 4, 2020

Scripture

1 Corinthians 2:1-13

1 When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. 6 Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. 7 But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"—10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. 13 And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. James E. Davison '69, Academia (2009)

Across the Allegheny River from Highland Park, the Roman Catholic parish in Aspinwall, St. Scholastica, contains an intriguing crucifix on the back wall of the chancel. Behind a larger-than-life wood carving of the crucified Jesus, the artist has painted bright beams of light in red, yellow, and white, radiating outward in all directions. What a combination—the crucifixion joined together with the glory of the Lord!

Now I don't usually link the crucifixion with glory. I think of *God* as glorious, *God's creative works* as glorious, and certainly *the resurrection* as glorious. But the cross? Not so much. But then, this image in the chancel reminded me of verse 8 of today's passage from 1 Corinthians 2, with the Apostle Paul's comment about "the rulers of this age" who "crucified the Lord of glory."

How could those rulers have missed Jesus' identity? It's because, says Paul, they were looking for glory in human characteristics such as power, wisdom, impressive speech, and noble birth. In short, those rulers expected to find glory in the kind of qualities that all human societies—including our own!—have normally prized and praised.

Paul recognized that the early Corinthian church was also captivated by such thinking, hence his reminder in verse 2 that he had tried to counter their expectations by "knowing nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Obviously, this striking phrase describes perfectly the need for those Corinthians, and for all later followers of Jesus (again, including us, of course) to focus on humility, not glory. But the mysterious truth here, which, in verse 7, Paul calls "God's secret and hidden wisdom," is precisely this: we are imitating our glorious Lord as we live humbly and give of ourselves for the benefit of others.

As we reflect on God's hidden wisdom this Lenten season, perhaps we can recall St. Scholastica's chancel, with the link it makes between the cross and the Lord of glory. For me, that means trying to

serve with a greater awareness that such service isn't only about showing compassion or meeting someone's need. Whether helping a friend, assisting in a mission or ministry, or undertaking some very minor service, at a deeper, hidden level there's also a glorious aspect to it, for it means that I'm walking in the way the Lord of glory did when he offered himself so selflessly for others.

Prayer

Glorious God, I thank you that in Jesus Christ you have revealed your hidden wisdom and displayed your power through what our world calls weakness and foolishness. Grant that I, too, may display wisdom in serving and giving of myself, instead of striving after success or seeking for things such as worldly approval or acclaim. In Christ, the Lord of glory, I pray. Amen.