

## **Theological Reflection**

### **The Mystery**

In these past days, we have all tried to enter more fully into the mystery of our redemption. By our 40-day Lenten journey, we have tried once again to understand God taking on flesh and becoming one of us and then suffering and dying for us. Jesus lived and died for you and for me and for all of God's creatures. We might know the catechism truths about Jesus saving us by his obedience to the Father and his will, but still not comprehend the depth of salvation and redemption.

Even Mary, who pondered so many mysteries in her heart throughout her life, had to know her Son in a new way on that Easter morning. Her beloved Son stood before her with his resurrected body as her Risen Lord. There would be a new way of relating to him. St. Paul encountered this same Risen Lord on the way to Damascus many years after the Resurrection. In this wondrous meeting Saul became Paul and experienced that this Jesus not only stood before him but he was within him. This was the beginning of the many lessons that his God would be teaching him especially in the next three years. One encounter alone left Saul a different man. As God did with choosing David, who would carry out his entire purpose, so he does in choosing Saul for this man would share so much of the mystery with all believers. During those days in Saudi Arabia, he reflected on Jesus asking him, "Saul why are you persecuting me?" With the answer of Jesus came the first teaching on the Mystical Body of Christ. By being inside of Saul, Jesus taught him that the Risen Lord lives in us, his members, by grace. He effected this by his glorious Resurrection. By his Resurrection, he grants us the grace and presence of his Spirit at our Baptism. By doing so we enjoy the same Holy Spirit that the Father and Son do. We begin to live the life of the Trinity on our Baptismal day.

It is fitting that we turn to the majestic verses of Paul's letter to the Ephesians that we might reflect again on the mystery of salvation. We give special weight to all of Paul's writings since he reminds us that he has been appointed by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. From the very beginning of God's plan of salvation, it was decided that all creation and every human creature would be chosen in and through Christ. All of heavens' spiritual blessings come to us through Christ. Being chosen through Christ we are to be like him, holy and spotless. As adopted children we enjoy a family relationship with the Father and the Son, now our brother, and with the Holy Spirit. "For his own kind purposes to make us praise the glory of his grace," since it is through Jesus that we receive every grace. Not only do we praise God for the glory of his grace but also we begin to realize that we are part of this praise of glory. By our very existence given to us by God

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through Christ we give God glory. We are told that this fathomless mystery was accomplished for us by Christ through the shedding of his blood. The Father had decided that the blood of the Son would bathe the entire world through all time to save us all. The precious blood would stream down the hill of Calvary to touch and redeem every soul. Blood would gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins. We enjoy already some of the eternal happiness of heaven by what Jesus has done for us. His blood and grace he has showered on us granting us wisdom and insight whereby we know the mystery of his purpose.

As born again Christians we know, through the Holy Spirit, and feel in our persons the power and effect of his blood and grace in our lives. The Spirit helps us to enter the depths of the Easter–resurrection mystery. We know not only Jesus’ purpose in all that he did to save us but we have a great conviction of purpose in life. We are to intercede for this world begging God’s mercy. Maybe our original encounter with the Resurrected Jesus was not as dramatic as Paul’s but we have met and know the Lord as the living God-man. We are absolutely certain of his being alive and active in this world, especially in our lives. We like Paul are just as certain that God has a plan and that we are part of that plan.

Possibly Paul saw part of the heavenly, hidden plan made through Christ that already exists in heaven. A plan that would unfold in time until time itself would run its course when God would bring everything together under Christ as head. In other places, Paul would speak of Jesus being the new head of creation, a new head of the body, the mystical body of the Church. What had happened in heaven where Jesus heads all as Lord and God is happening now and will be completed on earth at the end of the age. Everything in the heavens and everything on the earth will be brought together in Christ as he heads all creation. This is already occurring through us who are the members of his Mystical Body. What is happening in us now will be completed in heaven. And what has happened in us? I am just going to deal briefly with our own unique, personal encounter with Jesus. Some like to refer to this encounter as their “burning bush experience” where God made himself present to them. This occurs in prayer, at a liturgical service, during a sermon or strolling down a shaded lane. God chooses the time to break into our lives. Many of you have the meeting with God as the Apostles did on Easter morning and as Mary Magdalene and Thomas and the couple on their way to Emmaus did. Think of how Jesus broke into your life. Remember again his great mercy shown to you. I recall Adrienne’s encounter on Sunday night, January 3, 1982.

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She had no knowledge of resting in the Spirit nor of the “Baptism in the Holy Spirit”, but on that night through the laying on of hands by Francis McNutt in an Episcopal church she met Jesus who came with healing in his hands and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit for her soul and the call on her life. From that night, she felt the warmth of his presence and was intensely interested in reading about healing prayer. Pope Benedict XVI in so many of his recent writings talks repeatedly of this personal relationship with Jesus. In this relationship we become keenly aware of the Lordship of Jesus.

We must be forever grateful remembering the triumph and supremacy of Christ. “May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers. This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power or Domination, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. He has put all things under his feet, and made him, as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church, which is his body the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.” (Ephesians 1:17-23)

May your careful praying on these opening verses of Paul’s letter to the Christians at Ephesus flood your mind and heart with God’s light. May the Apostle Paul lead you deeper and deeper into the mystery of Jesus’ Resurrection and your own precious resurrection life.

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