

Commentary to the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time



“May I never boast save in the cross of our

Lord Jesus Christ.” Galatians 6:14.

This is quite a change. St. Paul is speaking positively about boasting. I thought boasting was bad. I thought we were never supposed to boast. I mean, I know that last year I was conceited and that this year I’m perfect, but I also know that it is wrong to boast about it. Is there ever a time when boasting is OK, even good?

Well, boasting is certainly bad when it is the self-centered, egomaniacal ranting of a tortured soul who bases his or her value on the opinions of others. But boasting is not bad when it reflects its original meaning of rejoicing in something that is good.

St. Paul had reason to boast. And it was not over what he did for the Lord. Paul was a little powerhouse who brought the Gospel of Jesus Christ to tens of thousands of people throughout the Roman Empire. But Paul would not boast in this, or in anything he did. He would not rejoice in his accomplishments. But Paul did boast. He boasted in the Cross of Jesus Christ. He rejoiced that Jesus

Christ died for him. He rejoiced that because of the cross, he was a new creation. He rejoiced, boasted, in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we join St. Paul and rejoice in the cross of Jesus Christ. We boast with Paul that we have been saved from sin, saved from a meaningless, empty life, saved from running towards nothing, saved from being an insignificant blip on the radar of humanity. We join Paul in rejoicing that we have become a New Creation.

What does that mean, “new creation?” That means exactly what it sounds like. We have become new beings. We are not just physical. Due to the cross of Jesus Christ, we are spiritual. We have received His Life within us. We can live forever if we live in Him. We rejoice that we are not “of this world.” We are holy. We are set apart for God. That is what it means to be holy.

Our God wants us. Our God loves us. Our God empowers us. Our God is with us. We belong to Him. We are so united to Him that we are united to His sacrificial love on the cross. And we rejoice in this union with Jesus. We boast in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been branded by Christ. The cattlemen of the Old West would brand their steer to declare their ownership. We have been branded by Christ. He has declared His ownership of us. We have been branded with the Cross. Paul says that he bore in his body the marks of Jesus Christ. It is tempting to dismiss this as referring to Paul having the stigmata. There is no record of this. Other Christians would have spoken about Paul bleeding from his hands and feet and side as St. Francis, St. Padre Pio and so many others would do. What Paul is referring to is this: he bore the ownership of Christ in His Life. He lived the sacrificial love of the Cross. He lived for the kingdom, suffered for the Kingdom and would die for the Kingdom. The only thing that Paul would boast about is the love of Jesus Christ, the sacrificial love of the Lord, the Cross.

We also bear on our bodies the marks of Jesus Christ. We have been branded by the Lord. That brand is our sharing in His sacrificial love. We boast in the Cross of the Lord. We find joy in sharing the sacrificial love of the Lord. So we are mocked for not joining immorality, we are kept down in work or school for not seeking advancement by stepping on others. It hurts when people laugh at us for being committed Catholics. But we still rejoice. We rejoice in the opportunities we have to love as Jesus loved. We boast in the cross of the Lord.

We rejoice in that we can be Christ for others. St. Teresa of Avila wrote:

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

Compassion on this world,

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,

Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

How great is that! We are a new creation We are Christ for others. We are Christians. We are Catholics. It is as Catholics that we receive the strength to boast in the Cross, the strength to bear the wounds of the Lord.

Isaiah 66 says, "Rejoice in the Lord, Jerusalem" and then uses the imagery of the people nursing at a mother's abundant breasts. This is a prophesy of the Catholic Church. The Church is our mother, feeding us, sustaining us. It is through the Church that we receive the sacraments. It is through the Church that we receive the Word. It is through the Church that we serve Christ's Presence in the poor and suffering of the world. And there is plenty to go around. Mother Church's breasts are abundant. We receive communion weekly, if not daily. We need the Eucharist to be able to boast in the Lord. We receive penance regularly, We need the sacrament of compassion to fend off the attacks of the devil. Your marriages are not just celebrated in the Church. They are unions your lives to the Love of Christ so that husbands and wives can be Christ for each other. My priesthood is not my job. It is who I am. Priests are transformed with an indelible mark to be alter Christi's so the people of God can

be united to Christ through Word and Sacrament. We have so much. We have been given so much. And the Lord wants to give us so much more.

And so we rejoice. We rejoice with 72 who felt the power of God working through them. We join them on their return to the Lord, loud, yelling their joy. We join Jesus in yelling right along with them, along with us.

Sin has lost it's power

Death has lost its sting.

From the grave You've Risen

Victoriously!

Into a marvelous light I'm running

Out of darkness, out of shame

Through the cross, You are the truth.

You are the life.

You are the way. (Charlie Hall Marvelous Light CCLI License # 2368115)

And so we boast in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. For through the Cross we have become a new creation.

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