

## Trinity VIII (02-08-09)

*“the Spirit of adoption”* (Epistle)

It is tempting to preach against a former presiding bishop of the American “episcopalians” who declared that individual salvation was a heresy. “Ye shall know them by their fruits” which include millions of dollars spent on lawsuits against Christians. Tempting, but cheap. God will judge. For us, better concentrate on that individual salvation which is the heart of the Gospel. For each one of us, as well as the Church collectively, has received, as part of the baptismal gift of the Spirit, the privilege of calling God Father. (Not “daddy”; Abba is simply the grammatically correct form of the word Father when used as an address.) And God calls us his children.

Today I am selecting from a sermon by Newman. “WHEN Adam fell, his soul lost its true strength; he forfeited the inward light of God's presence, and became the wayward, fretful, excitable, and miserable being which his history has shown him to be ever since; with alternate strength and feebleness, nobleness and meanness, energy in the beginning and failure in the end.”

“Such is the state in which every one of us lies as born into the world; and Christ has come to reverse this state, and restore us the great gift which Adam lost in the beginning. Adam fell from his Creator's favour to be a bond-servant; and Christ has come to set us free again, to impart to us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we become God's children, and again approach Him as our Father.”

“I say, by birth we are in a state of defect and want; we have not all that is necessary for the perfection of our nature. As the body is not complete in itself, but requires the soul to give it a meaning, so again the soul till God is present with it and manifested in it, has faculties and affections without a ruling principle, object, or purpose.”

“The soul of man is made for the contemplation of its Maker; and nothing short of that high contemplation is its happiness; whatever it may possess besides, it is unsatisfied till it is vouchsafed God's presence, and lives in the light of it.”

“The happiness of the soul consists in the exercise of the affections; not in sensual pleasures, not in activity, not in excitement, not in self esteem, not in the consciousness of power, not in knowledge; in none of these things lies our happiness, but in our affections being elicited, employed, supplied. As hunger and thirst, as taste, sound, and smell, are the channels through which this bodily frame receives pleasure, so the affections are the instruments by which the soul has pleasure. When they are exercised duly, it is happy; when they are undeveloped, restrained, or thwarted, it is not happy. This is our real and true bliss, not to know, or to affect, or to pursue; but to love, to hope, to joy, to admire, to revere, to adore.”

“We may indeed love things created with great intenseness, but such affection, when disjoined from the love of the Creator, is like a stream running in a narrow channel, impetuous, vehement, turbid. The heart runs out, as it were, only at one door; it is not an expanding of the whole man. Created natures cannot open us, or elicit the ten thousand mental senses which belong to us, and through which we really live. None but the presence of our Maker can enter us; for to none besides can the whole heart in all its thoughts and feelings be unlocked and subjected.”

“The peace of a good conscience is the habitual consciousness that our hearts are open to God, with a desire that they should be open. It is a confidence in God, from a feeling that there is nothing in us which we need be ashamed or afraid of. You will say that no man on earth is in such a state; for we are all sinners, and that daily. It is so. . . . But, first, there may be degrees of this confidence in different men, though the perfection of it be in none. And again, God in His great mercy, as we all well know, has revealed to us that there is a Mediator between the sinful soul and Himself. And as His merits most wonderfully intervene between our sins and God's judgment, so the thought of those merits, when present with the Christian, enables him, in spite of his sins, to lift up his heart to God; and believing, as he does, that he is (to use Scripture language) in Christ, or, in other words, that he addresses Almighty God, not simply face to face, but in and through Christ, he can bear to submit and open his heart to God, and to wish it open.”

God help us to live as he promises!