

Homily—15th Sunday OT; B-cycle

There was once a farmer who found an eagle's egg, and he put it in his chicken coop for his hens to hatch it.

In time the egg did hatch and the eaglet emerged, but since it had lived his life among chickens, the eagle grew up thinking itself a chicken.

It scratched the ground like a chicken. It ate feed like a chicken. It clucked like--. It would even fly in short hops like a chicken.

But one day while the eagle was scratching the ground in their confined area, he looked up into the sky, and saw another eagle circling majestically above.

In amazement, he asked one of his brother chickens, "what is that?"

The chicken answered, "O that's an eagle, the king of all the birds, but that life isn't for us, we're just chickens."

The problem the eagle in that story had, is the same problem that many Catholic Christians have in the world today. We are not living what we have been called to.

You see, all of us have been called. All of us have been chosen.

God has willed that all of us be eagles, but many are content to live like chickens.

Saint Paul reminds us of our calling in our 2nd reading.

Saint Paul in fact, reminds us of a few things in that reading.

"Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ, every spiritual blessing in the heavens."

So the first thing Paul reminds us of is that through Christ we have been given blessings in abundance. We have been empowered.

"It is in Christ and through his blood that we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven."

The second thing Paul reminds us of, is that Christ's sacrifice has washed away the guilt of the past.

So now that we have been empowered, we don't have to live in fear anymore.

We have been given access to the mercy of God.

And the last thing Saint Paul reminds us of in this 2nd reading, *"In him we have been chosen."*

We have been chosen. We did not choose God. God chose us.

In Jesus' time when a student wanted to follow a certain rabbi for instruction, the student would petition the rabbi and ask for permission to be his disciple.

It was an apprenticeship like any other.

One of the things that separates Jesus from any other first century rabbi is that Jesus is one who does the choosing.

Jesus says, "you, follow me...Come with me and I will make you fishers of men." And when someone wants to follow Jesus, "Lord, I will be your disciple just let me take leave of my people." Jesus sends him away.

Not typical for a first century rabbi, because we do not choose God, God chose us. Despite what you may think, you are not here because you chose to be.

You are here because God chose you to be.

What did God choose us for? To be his co-workers--building of his kingdom.

Now this belief of ours is a stumbling block to both our Protestant and Moslem brothers and sisters.

They believe that we believe we are somehow adding to or making better the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. Not so.

St. Paul also tells us that Jesus' sacrifice was once for all time, and he is correct.

Scott Hahn, of Franciscan University in Steubenville Ohio, tells a great story of when he was once watching a man trying to cut his lawn.

The problem was, his little six-year-old son with his toy lawn mower kept getting in the way.

The man soon realized that at his present pace this project was going to take him all day, but instead of scolding the boy, or sending him away, he took his son under one arm, and carried him, while keeping his other arm on the handle of the lawnmower.

The child had both his hands on the handle of the lawnmower as well, and you could see how he beamed with delight, as he and his father pushed the mower around the yard.

Now this small boy fancied himself his father's co-worker. But was he?
In a strict sense yes. Now we can debate the significance of his contribution.
But there's no denying that he was his father's co-worker.
But what did the Father of that child did in that gesture, of letting his little son
share in his work was that the Father dignified the son, in raising him to
his level! And that is exactly what God has done for us!
Because before anything else, God is our loving Father!
God has given us dignity, by allowing us the honor of sharing in his work.

That is why we have been empowered.—forgiven. —called. —chosen.

And that is why we have been given the Church.

The Church is the vehicle God has used to give us the blessings we have been
empowered with, and to use the forgiveness that has been offered us, so
we can participate in building his kingdom.

The Church is the kingdom of God.

There is no getting around that truth in the gospels.

God has a kingdom in heaven that we hopefully all are striving for.

But God is building a kingdom here on earth.

And how well we strive toward God's heavenly kingdom, is proportional to how
well we work at building God's earthly one.

This is what we pray in the Lord's prayer, "*Your Kingdom Come.*"

The kingdom of God is defined as, "*the power of God's love active in our lives and in
the world.*"

So since the power of God's love has been present from the beginning of time,
God's kingdom is in the past.

Since the power of God's love is made active in our lives and in the world
through the sacraments, the Kingdom of God is in the present.

But God's kingdom also isn't completely here yet.

It's something we're still working and waiting for.

When will God's kingdom come?

When His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

And God's will in heaven is done perfectly and immediately.

So you see, the commandments, the beatitudes, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, we don't do these things for ourselves. We do them to build the kingdom.

So when we listen to someone who has a problem and offer a comforting word, we share in Jesus' work who offered comfort. We build the kingdom.

When we make a donation to charity, we share in Jesus' work who fed the hungry. We build the kingdom.

When we pray, we share in Jesus' work, who prayed constantly to his heavenly Father for strength and guidance. We build the kingdom.

When we care for, or visit someone who's sick or elderly, we share in Jesus' work of healing. We build the kingdom.

"Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ, every spiritual blessing in the heavens!"

Brothers and sisters, DON'T WASTE YOUR LIVES BEING CHICKENS,

because sooner or later, chickens always end up in the soup!

(ever hear of anyone eating eagle soup? NOOO! Not gonna happen!)

In Christ we have been chosen to be eagles.

My prayer for us today is that we soar to the heavens.

Blessed be God forever.