

Text: 1 Corinthians 2:6-10  
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A  
12 February 2017  
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St Valentine was a priest in ancient Rome who died in the persecution of Christians by Emperor Claudius II, supposedly for performing marriages for Christian couples. St Valentine was executed on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 273 AD, and February 14 became St Valentine's Day. St Valentine was put to death by having his head chopped off. St Valentine's life and death demonstrates to us what our own personal experience has proven: love can make you lose your head. Happy St Valentine's Day!

About 20 years after the resurrection of Jesus, St Paul wrote two letters to the parish he had started in the port city of Corinth. For the past month we've been reading through Paul's first letter at Sunday Mass, and we will read through it to the end. St Paul wrote these letters because the parishioners in Corinth were squabbling, fighting among themselves. There was a group in the parish claiming that besides the general Christian faith in Jesus, the Son of God, come to earth for us, died and risen from the dead, sender of the Holy Spirit, there also was a mysterious and hidden spiritual wisdom that only a few Christians had, a wisdom that made them superior to other Christians, made them "special". Paul writes his letter back to his parish to make clear that, no, there is no special wisdom from God, hidden from most Christians but revealed only to few. Everything we can know about God's plan of salvation for us, Paul insists, is what every Christian knows. God's plan for us is seen in Jesus, crucified on the cross and risen from the dead for us - and the resurrection of Jesus, even when Paul doesn't mention it, was central to the Christian faith Paul was sharing in the ancient world, because Paul never knew the earthly Jesus, Paul only knew the Risen Christ who he met on the road to Damascus, and became his follower. If you've been following the readings from St Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> Letter to the Corinthians the past month at Mass, that is what you have been hearing.

Today, however, Paul says there *is* a mysterious and hidden wisdom of God, but that hidden wisdom is not known to *any* Christian, and it is not something we need to know for our salvation or for how to live the Christian life. *This* hidden wisdom is God's plan, predetermined from before

time began, of what God intends for us and the world and God moves on past the resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit to things even more glorious, to restore creation back to the original perfection and glory creation – including us – possessed at the beginning of time, and which creation and we will have once again when God ends this world and brings everything back to himself forever in the new creation in heaven.

This wisdom, God’s plan, is not known to anyone on earth, Paul says, certainly not political leaders Paul points out, because otherwise – if political leaders had known what God was doing in the world through Jesus – those political leaders wouldn’t have crucified Jesus, the Lord of Glory as Paul calls the crucified Jesus to point out that Jesus foiled their plans and now rules the universe in glory with the Father in heaven. That is a truth that has resounded for 2,000 years, a truth that is international and bipartisan, the truth that *no* earthly government can offer us salvation and ultimate meaning, that *no* earthly government ever can claim to speak for God – and it has been tried.

Paul is assuring his parish, and assuring Christians everywhere – the reason his letters were copied and circulated among Christians – assuring us that God’s hidden plan for the world is nothing we need be afraid of, because we have seen what the Father has done for us in his Son Jesus. That merciful heart of God, revealed in Jesus, is what lies behind the even more glorious things that the Father has in store for us, things that God is gradually revealing to us on earth through the Holy Spirit until we arrive, at last, at the eternal day of heaven. Knowing Jesus, died and risen from the dead for us, we know all we need to know of God’s plan, and we can take one step ahead at a time, confident in God’s *invisible* plan but *visible* grace. As we heard St Paul say today:

*What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,  
and what has not entered the human heart,  
what God has prepared for those who love him,  
this is what God has revealed to us  
through the Holy Spirit.*