

Circumcision

Morning Prayer

First Lesson: Deut 30:1-10

Second Lesson: Eph 2:11-22

Homily

Of course we all know
that today is New Year's Day
on the civil calendar,
celebrated by innumerable parties,
some of them rather wild,
with great rejoicing and excitement
right at the stroke of midnight.
It's a brand new year,
"Out with the Old and in with the New!"
Innumerable resolutions have been made,
most of which will not be kept,
and tomorrow ...
well, tomorrow
is just the same old same old all over again.

That all is such a central thing
to the society in which we live
that we simply cannot ignore it;
but a new year is not
what the Church celebrates today.

We already had our New Year observance.
During Advent we began our year
with a remembrance of the Old Testament,
with a preparation for the celebration
of new beginnings in the Birth of Christ,
and with a preparation of ourselves
to meet Our Lord, whether at our death,
or at His triumphant Return.

Yes, we had our New Year's observance,
and it wasn't with raucous
"try-to-forget-it-all" parties,
but with a somber and thoughtful remembrance
of sin and redemption,
of unworthiness and hope,
of a Promise as sure as it is undeserved.

Today the Church celebrates something different.
Today we think about continuity,
about obedience,
and about a divine call given and expanded.

Our Bible is neatly divided into two parts:

First, there is an Old Testament,
given to a chosen people,
containing a calling given to them,
full of laws and instructions

as to how this calling should be lived out,
and with promises, poorly understood but real,
of the ultimate working out of this calling.

Second, there is a New Testament,
given through a chosen people
to an entire world,
a message of grace and salvation,
and of fulfillment of God's plan for mankind.

Today we remember the coming of Our Lord,
into a particular people,
who had a particular role to play,
chosen before the foundation of the world
to provide the fleshly dwelling-place
for the eternal Son of God.
We remember how He submitted Himself
to all the requirements of belonging to that nation,
how he accepted the mark of circumcision,
living as a good Jew
from the very beginning of His earthly life.
He, the everlasting Word,
by whom all the Law was spoken,
was obedient in all things.

But look at what was foreshadowed,
even so far back as the Book of Deuteronomy:

*“And the LORD thy God
will circumcise thine heart,
and the heart of thy seed,
to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart,
and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”*

Yes, God did have a particular sign,
by which his people were identified as His alone,
and distinguished from those around them,
and, yes, Our Lord did receive that very sign,
and became a part of that very people.
But he received it for us.
In that beginning of sacrifice,
in a sacrificial life,
and in the ultimate Sacrifice of Calvary,
he has called us all, every one who will,
to be a part of that chosen people,
in our Baptism,
and in our continual feasting on that Sacrifice
in the celebration of Eucharist
and the receiving of His Body and Blood.

Listen to St. Paul:

*“... at that time ye were without Christ,
being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,
and strangers from the covenants of promise,
having no hope, and without God in the world:”*

He was obedient in all things,
perfectly submitted to the will of His Father,
and our Father,
entirely without sin,
and yet one of us in every way.

through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

He shed blood on the eighth day of his earthly life.
He shed blood on the Cross of Calvary.
His Blood is manifest in our churches
every time we celebrate Eucharist,
and we are washed in that Blood,
cleansed by that Sacrifice,
made pure and clean and holy
that we may worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
both here on earth and there in heaven,
that we may be His people,
now and in all the ages to come.

Let us pray.

O God, who hast made of one blood all nations of
men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and
didst send thy blessed Son to preach peace to them
that are far off and to them that are nigh; Grant that
all men everywhere may seek after thee and find
thee. Bring the nations into thy fold, pour out thy
spirit upon all flesh, and hasten thy kingdom;

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Evening Prayer

First Lesson: Deut 30:11-20

Second Lesson: Rev 19:11-16

Homily