

Donnybrook

22 October 2021

Welcome

Probably we all share the experience reflected in today's first reading. Sometimes in great things, sometimes in little things, we have plans and we fail. We see the good we should do and we end up doing the evil we wish to avoid. As they say, welcome to the human race, will you be staying long?

Topic

Who is Paul speaking of?

Steps

Yesterday, I checked how many eyes spiders have. Apparently, most spiders have 8 eyes, some have no eyes at all and some have 12. All this is by way of introduction to Romans 7 and how many "I"s are in the chapter? I think the answer is this chapter has three eyes. There is the I of Paul himself – clearly he feels this human dilemma very sharply. Behind that, in the story of the Israel, there is the I representing the people of Israel – who strove and failed often, sometimes spectacularly. Further behind that is the I of the human race – full of good dreams and good intentions, often not realised, that we can all identify with.

Why parade all this misery? The key to unlock it all is found in the found in the final exclamation, question and affirmation in today's reading. The exclamation and question strike a note of frustrated exasperation at self:

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body doomed to death?

The affirmation is far more positive if not yet quite clear:

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The gratitude is in anticipation of the wonderful, life-enhancing chapter 8 of the letter to the Romans. It is a great blessing that we are to hear almost all of chapter 8 on Saturday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Earlier in Romans Paul said that the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. Now, in Romans 8 he explores and expounds that reality: we can call God "Abba" father through the Holy Spirit and through the same Holy Spirit nothing will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Conclusion

To benefit from Romans 8 over the next few days, it would be a great help to each one of us if we took the trouble to read through the great chapter. It won't all be clear, but the sheer conviction and poetry of Paul will lift us up from the misery of the human condition to glimpse even now what God has in store for those who love him.