

Donnybrook

28 October 2021

Welcome

We have reached the very last portion of Romans 8. As explained, I opted to stay with the first reading of the day really because it would be a shame to miss the climax closing the end of the chapter. There is nothing in the New Testament quite like the absolute reassurance at the end:

“...nothing...can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Topic

Is it possible for us to hear such an absolute guarantee today?

Steps

In the nineteenth century, the well-known economist, Karl Marx, claimed that religion is the opium of the people, designed as a kind of narcotic to keep the oppressed from revolution. There can be a lingering suspicion that faith is simply pie in the sky, a drug to get us through the difficulties of life. But even though we are aware of that risk, for us as reflective believers, we should not be afraid to benefit from our convictions.

And there is profound reassurance. At the end of Matthew’s Gospel, we have the words “I will be with you always until the end of the age.” The teaching of St Paul is just as strong: “...nothing...can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.” You could ask how would you know? Earlier in Romans, in chapter 5:5, we have a corresponding affirmation: the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. (Romans 5:5) This means the we should know from our own inner experience that these claims are true and therefore reliable.

St Paul speaks of the love of God *made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord*. He has in mind Jesus’ death and resurrection as the disclosure of God’s astonishing love which sets us free. Free not only from sin, as in the tradition, but even more free from the power of death and the fear of death. Because we need not be anxious about the ultimate outcome, we are not only free from but also free for. We are free to live our lives joyfully, lovingly, generously, without counting the cost.

Conclusion

The great chapter 8 is read fully over five days in our liturgy. It is surely one of the most exhilarating chapters to come from St Paul – a real charter to live fully in the Spirit, to know the love of God and to be disciples of Jesus Christ. If you’ve never done it, today might be a good day to take out the whole chapter and read it all through – let yourself be inspired and uplifted.