

# Fr. Tom's Celestial Musings

## The Year of Saint Paul

### Part 4: Saint Paul and Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>

When I was pastor at St. Michael Catholic Church in Van Buren, AR, I met a sweet elderly lady named Margaret. One of the things that I remember about Margaret is that she always referred to Christ as, “My Jesus.” She said it in such a genuine way that I knew her words reflected a very personal relationship with the Lord. In reality, each of us relates to Christ in a unique and personal way. We can see this reality in a particular way in the writings of the New Testament evangelists, including Saint Paul.

In his letters, Paul reveals his unique relationship with Jesus Christ. Who was Jesus for Saint Paul? Paul did not write much about Jesus’ earthly ministry. Instead, he wrote a lot about Christ’s Resurrected role. The Lord was the Savior, whose identity is rooted more in heaven than in His earthly teachings and ministry. While Jesus’ earthly ministry is extremely important and should not be set aside, Paul challenges us to get to know the Resurrected Christ, as well. He challenges us to move beyond simply knowing *about* Christ and actually getting to *know* Christ.

According to Saint Paul’s letters, Christ’s Resurrected role has three important parts. Stephen Harris writes about these parts in his book, The New Testament. First, Christ is the revelation of God’s Wisdom. This is expressed beautifully in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians when he writes, “For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:22-24).

In addition to being the Wisdom of God, Paul understood Christ to be the Eternal Lord, through whom the Father reigns. To the Christians at Philippi, Paul wrote, “Because of this, God greatly exalted [Christ] and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

Jesus Christ is also the mediator of the Holy Spirit. It is through Him that all believers can be filled with the Spirit and directed by the Spirit. This moves us beyond the shackles of the old law and frees us to embrace holiness out of love of God rather than out of fear of the law.

You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

-Romans 8:9-10

All three of these images have a common thread to them—they all offer us a Savior who provides reassurance. In Christ’s Wisdom, we are reassured about what we know and we don’t have to fear what we don’t yet know. In Christ’s Lordship, we find reassurance that we will be protected, especially in an eternal way and from evil. In Christ’s Spirit, we are reassured that God is with us until the end of time.

As we continue to celebrate the Year of St. Paul, let’s allow ourselves to get to know the Christ that St. Paul knew—which was far beyond things written in a book and all about a God who was inscribed on the heart. **May we not only know *about* Christ, but also *know* Christ.**

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<sup>1</sup> In honor of the “Year of Saint Paul,” this is part four of a ten part series on his life and writings.