

**WANT YOUR CHILD (OR YOURSELF) TO BE AN 'A' STUDENT?
HERE'S HOW!**

The story is told of William Phelps who taught English literature at Yale back in the early 1900s. Once, as he was marking an examination paper just before Christmas, Phelps found a near blank answer sheet on which a student had scribbled, "Only God knows the answer to this question. Merry Christmas." Phelps returned the paper with this note: "God gets an A. You get an F. Happy New Year." On this last Sunday before Christmas, the Church, using the closing words of Paul to the Romans, in the 2nd reading, invites us to celebrate the great mystery known only to God for ages, which has now been revealed to believers in Christ.

We hear from Paul that the free gift of salvation, promised by the prophets of old in the Hebrew Scriptures was now, in Christ, available to all humankind, Jews and Gentiles alike was, for Paul, the Good News. This was the secret mystery hidden in ages past but which has now been revealed through the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

The chosen Twelve Apostles received three years of apprenticeship under Jesus and still did not get it. It would take the number one apostle, Peter, the Rock, many more years of growing in the faith and the benefit of a special revelation from God to discover this mystery. Today, our own Holy Father, Pope Francis carries on with this ministry as he challenges us to care for the poor, the abandoned, and the needy as the path of growing in faith and obedience to the Lord.

Paul tells us in today's short passage that the purpose of this revelation was to bring about the obedience of faith (Romans 16:26). This powerful expression can be understood either as the obedience that comes from faith, or the faith that comes from obedience, or the faith that equals obedience. Both ways, it means that in Christ, the relationship between faith and obedience is no longer that of either ... or both ... and, God wants His children to serve Him by faith and obedience, not by faith alone, and not by obedience (good works) alone.

As Christmas draws near, let us join Paul in glorifying God for the wondrous thing He has done for us by sending us his only begotten son. Let us resolve that this year's Christmas celebration will not be another Christmas as usual but a heartfelt celebration of divine grace.

When this is done, you will get an "A", and more importantly you will know that...

YOU ARE LOVED,
Deacon Dan

+ From a homily by Fr. Munachi Ezeogu