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PART OF THE FAMILY

Question: Were any of you adopted?

- In truth, all of you—all of us—were adopted.
  - Now, you may be sitting there thinking, “No, I wasn’t! I lived with my biological parents. I was never adopted.”

Paul, however, would disagree with you.

- In today’s reading from Romans, Paul says, “The SPIRIT you received brought about your adoption.”

This is an important concept for Christians to grasp.

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Think about biological families.

- Family members don’t get to pick each other (though sometimes we might wish we could).
    - Is it fate? Divine design?
    - Your parents, children, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, grandchildren were not your choice.
    - You are part of the family into which you were born, just because you are.
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Paul in Romans, though, gives us this different analogy to describe the Christian Church and your place in it.

- “Through the SPIRIT you were adopted.”
    - Adoption means that you were chosen.
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I have a friend who was adopted at age six.

- He remembers well the day his parents came and pointed him out from all the other kids.
    - Before they came, he was no one: no identity, no heritage, no inheritance.
    - After they came and chose him, he had parents, family, identity, heritage, inheritance. He was someone.
  - Adoption means that you were chosen and made someone.
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Paul says that we received the SPIRIT of adoption, meaning that GOD chose us. GOD didn’t have to, but GOD did.

- And in doing so, GOD gave us a family, an identity, a heritage, and an inheritance.
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When they were growing up, I would often tell my own children (and the kids in the youth group) before they would go places, “Remember who you are and remember WHOSE you are!”

- I was encouraging them to remember, first of all, that each of them is a child of GOD.
  - Second, I was reminding them that they were chosen by GOD, that they belong to GOD.
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In our Western culture, we tend to think in individual terms.

- We are responsible for ourselves and our own actions.
- We often think only about how things affect me.

JESUS and Paul lived in an Eastern culture where people understood things communally and corporately.

- The success of one was the success of all.
- The sin of one was the sin of all.
  - What happened to one has an impact on everyone.

In terms of adoption, we may in our Western minds think of it as a relationship between GOD and me,

- but adoption is a community event that puts one into a relationship, not just with GOD, but with all of GOD's family.
  - Adoption means that we not only have a FATHER, GOD, but that we also have brothers and sisters.
    - That's why we don't do private baptisms, but celebrate them in the midst of the congregation—the family.
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My adopted friend had an older sister who didn't want him.

- Despite her parents' choice, she carried a resentment of him so that she will not speak to him even today.
    - She liked being an only child.
    - She didn't choose him to be in *her* family.
      - But her parents did!
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In the story of the Prodigal Son, the younger brother rebels.

- He tells his father to drop dead and give him his inheritance.
    - He leaves the family.
  - Upon his return, though, his father chooses him to be in the family again. (Really, he was never out.)
    - His brother, however, doesn't seem to do the same thing.
    - He isn't happy about him coming back.
    - He isn't pleased that his father wants and welcomes his brother back.
      - But it's not the brother's choice.
      - The choice belongs to the father.
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GOD chooses brothers and sisters for us.

- We don't get to choose.
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I like the tradition in some churches of calling each other "Brother" or "Sister."

- (Brother Revueltas or Sister Mitzen.)

Look around at the people gathered here.

- These people are your brothers and sisters, as is anyone who desires to be part of the Christian Church.
  - They are your family—whether you like it or not.
  - It's not your choice.
    - They were adopted, just as you were adopted.
    - GOD, through the HOLY SPIRIT, chose them and you to be part of the family, the Church.
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But, like all families, we don't always get along, do we?

- Usually, it is because we're trying to get our own way instead of listening to our FATHER.
- When we come into a disagreement or conflict with a brother or sister, it is important to stop and ask,
  - "Whose will am I seeking to follow? My own or my heavenly FATHER's? What does DAD want?"
    - And our DAD says that we are to set aside our personal agendas and desires.
    - Instead, we must look at the big picture and GOD's vision for GOD's family.
    - Our FATHER wants us to set aside our personal wishes and put family first.

That is how GOD put us together, with the idea of family.

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Today is HOLY TRINITY Sunday and family is a good way to think about the TRINITY.

- We talk about the first person of the TRINITY as the FATHER.
  - But the Bible also tells us we should call the FATHER “DADDY,” “ABBA.”
  - Kids trust their DADDY to be strong and look after them, to keep them safe, provide for them, and teach them as they grow.
    - The relationship between child and DADDY is often close.
    - Kids liked to be picked up by DADDY or climb onto DADDY’s lap.

JESUS is the only true SON of the FATHER.

- The rest of us are adopted.
  - HE is our older brother who is glad to have us in the family.
  - HE is our example of how to be as members of the family.

And the HOLY SPIRIT?

- Well, in many ways, the HOLY SPIRIT is like a mother to us.
  - The SPIRIT gives birth to our faith, nurtures us, and tries to keep us connected to the family.
  - The HOLY SPIRIT goes with us as we step out into the world, and advises and corrects us when we go the wrong way.

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In this family, there is only one true child, JESUS.

- The SON is the same as the FATHER:
  - the same nature, the same values, the same vision.
  - If you want to know what DADDY is like, look how the SON turned out.

Unlike my friend’s sister, our big BROTHER loves us because our DADDY loves us.

- And that pleases our DADDY.
  - “This is MY beloved SON, with whom I am pleased. Listen to HIM.”
- Our big BROTHER wants to share HIS inheritance with us.
- Our big BROTHER will do anything for HIS little brothers and sisters,
  - including going to look for them when they are lost,
  - or even giving HIS life for them.

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A four-year-old girl had a rare blood disease.

- Only a transfusion from an exact matching blood type would save her.
  - Her six-year-old brother was found to be a match for her.
- His parents explained to him that giving his sister his blood would save her life.
  - Solemnly, he nodded.
- On the day of the procedure, as the blood began to flow from the older brother to the younger sister, the boy looked at his father and asked, “Will I start to die right away?”
  - He didn’t understand it was just going to be some of his blood that was needed.
  - He thought he had to give all his blood—and his life—to save his sister.

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Our big BROTHER gave more than some of HIS blood to save HIS sisters and brothers. HE gave HIS life!

- That’s some big BROTHER!
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You are adopted.

- You have a family with a loving and giving FATHER and BROTHER.
  - You didn’t have to do anything to get into the family.
  - You didn’t have to do anything to deserve to be in the family.
- You were chosen, and all you have to do is continue to discover what it means to have this FATHER and BROTHER.
  - All you have to do is learn what it means to be part of the family.