

Ephesians

Chapter 6

10-24

Finally, draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power.

Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground.

So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all (the) flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit. To that end, be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the holy ones and also for me, that speech may be given me to open my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, so that I may have the courage to speak as I must. So that you also may have news of me and of what I am doing, Tychicus, my beloved brother and trustworthy minister in the Lord, will tell you everything. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in immortality.

Luke

Chapter 9

18-27

Once when Jesus was praying in solitude, and the disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, 'One of the ancient prophets has arisen.'"

Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The Messiah of God." He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone.

He said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

John

Chapter 15

1-17

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: love one another.

Hebrews

Chapter 13

1-25

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels. Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment, and of the ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the body.

Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the immoral and adulterers. Let your life be free from love of money but be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never forsake you or abandon you." Thus we may say with confidence: "The Lord is my helper, (and) I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching. It is good to have our hearts strengthened by grace and not by foods, which do not benefit those who live by them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. The bodies of the animals whose blood the high priest brings into the sanctuary as a sin offering are burned outside the camp. Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he bore. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come. Through him (then) let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have; God is pleased by sacrifices of that kind. Obey your leaders and defer to them, for they keep watch over you and will have to give an account, that they may fulfill their task with joy and not with sorrow, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are confident that we have a clear conscience, wishing to act rightly in every respect. I especially ask for your prayers that I may be restored to you very soon. May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, Jesus our Lord, furnish you with all that is good, that you may do his will. May he carry out in you what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever (and ever). Amen. Brothers, I ask you to bear with this message of encouragement, for I have written to you rather briefly. I must let you know that our brother Timothy has been set free. If he comes soon, I shall see you together with him. Greetings to all your leaders and to all the holy ones. Those from Italy send you greetings. Grace be with all of you.

2 Corinthians

Chapter 5

11-21

Therefore, since we know the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we are clearly apparent to God, and I hope we are also apparent to your consciousness. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you an opportunity to boast of us, so that you may have something to say to those who boast of external appearance rather than of the heart. For if we are out of our minds, it is for God; if we are rational, it is for you. For the love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore, all have died. He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer. So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Ephesians

Chapter 5

21-33

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body. As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. So (also) husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man shall leave (his) father and (his) mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church. In any case, each one of you should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband.

Ephesians

Chapter 6

1-9

Children, obey your parents (in the Lord), for this is right. "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise, "that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord. Slaves, be obedient to your human masters with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ, not only when being watched, as currying favor, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, willingly serving the Lord and not human beings, knowing that each will be requited from the Lord for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. Masters, act in the same way toward them, and stop bullying, knowing that both they and you have a Master in heaven and that with him there is no partiality.

Men's Ministry

Discipleship

Ephesians 6:10-24

Fighting Spirit, the armor of God (3/3/07)

Questions for pondering and discussion:

The Devil

1. In what ways does the evil one manifest himself in your heart? When have you consciously been in battle with him and wrestled to free yourself from his grip? Temptations promise so much and deliver so little. What lies and enticements has the devil dangled in front of you in the hope that you could rationalize going against God's will?

Your Defenses

2. What tactics if any have you developed to defend yourself from overwhelming temptations? St. Paul describes all the parts of the armor of God that are necessary to resist the evil one. What pieces of the armor of God are strong and which are weak or missing from your life?

Jesus Christ

3. How do you draw upon the power of Christ in the on-going battle with the devil: the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, prayer, reading of the Sacred Scripture or some other means?

Men's Ministry
Discipleship
Take Up Your Cross
Luke 9, 18-27

Thoughts for reflection and discussion:

1. Have you identified one particular area in your life, a fault, a weakness, an excess, a deficiency that needs to be consciously confronted during these six weeks if you sincerely want to become a more faithful disciple of Christ?
2. What kind of suffering is that particular fault bringing into your life or the life of others as long as it has continued to go unchallenged? Has trying to fight and conquer that fault brought another type of suffering, the suffering of the cross, into your life? How do those two types of suffering (one being the fruit of sin the other being the effort to overcome sin) differ from one another?
3. Suffering is a reality in the life of every human person. Do you ever consciously as a disciple of Christ unite your own sufferings to the redemptive suffering of Christ on the Cross, thereby knowingly, in a very concrete way, exercise your discipleship by standing with Christ the King in his work of salvation? Would doing so enrich your spiritual life? Would doing so help you to understand how St. Paul could write to the Colossians that he rejoiced in his sufferings? Would it embolden you to more willingly and courageously endure the suffering that is required in your on-going conversion to become a more fully committed disciple?

For your speculation:

4. Jesus wanted to make it perfectly clear to his first disciples that he would suffer greatly, be killed and rise on the third day. Also he made it perfectly clear to them that if they wanted to be his disciples they would have to be willing to suffer. But Jesus didn't want them to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. Why?

Men's Ministry

Hebrews 13:1-25

Teachers in the Spiritual Life: Obey and Imitate God and Your Leaders

1. ON LEADERSHIP:

Who would you name as popular spiritual leaders today? Who do you turn to for spiritual guidance and leadership? Is there anyone in your life who you believe is watching out for your soul? Spiritually speaking to whom do you "submit and obey"? How do you exercise your role as a spiritual leader in your home to your wife and children?

2. THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS AND THE OUTCOME OF THEIR LIVES

What sacrifices have you made for the sake of your faith? What was the single greatest sacrifice you have made for your faith? When have you gone "beyond the city's limits" to offer a sacrifice-gone beyond the comfortable boundaries of your social safety net, been willing to "not fit in" for the sake of the faith? When have you found yourself in the dilemma of "what might others think vs. what does God prefer"? Have you ever been made to be uncomfortable because you are Catholic? What has been your response?

3. THE MINISTERIAL AND ROYAL PRIESTHOODS:

To what extent do you consider your prayer life and participation in the sacramental life of the Church as a sin offering, united to the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the Cross for the forgiveness of sins? How do you exercise your own priesthood-as a leader, teacher a sanctifier in your own home? What would you find difficult to offer up to God and perhaps be unwilling to?

4. KEEPING FREE FROM THE LOVE OF MONEY:

Is your work life, the 9-5 part of your day, something you chose to do out of love for God? How can you make your pursuit of money an exercise in giving glory to God and service to your fellow man? When I have made career decisions what has been the balance between asking "What will pay the best" and "What will please God most"?

Men's Ministry
Discipleship-The Ministry of Reconciliation
2 Cor. 5:11-21

1. What are some of the worldly standards, achievements you have accomplished or possessions you have acquired by which you measure your worldly success, and how does that measure of success compare to how successful you have been in willingly dying with Christ to live for God? How would others answer that question about you?
2. As Christians we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. We believe that by his death and resurrection God has reconciled us to himself and made us new creatures living in the light of eternal life. We believe that our reconciliation with God is accomplished by our willingness to die to self with Christ in order that we might live no longer for ourselves but for God. Are you living according to your faith? Are you prepared to defend these articles of faith against those who oppose them? Can you give a reason for why these articles of faith are the central tenets of your life?
3. St. Paul makes it clear to the Corinthians, and therefore he makes it clear to us, that we are called to be ambassadors of Christ, and that we are called to take on the ministry of reconciliation. In our culture should we, can we, how do we call others, **implore others**, to be reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Saint Mary Parish Men's Ministry

Saturday, April 14, 2007

Reading: Ephesians 5: 21- 6: 9

Introduction

The Letter to the Ephesians, written between 80 and 100 A.D., was not written by Saint Paul himself, although it is based on Paul's preaching and teaching. While it seems to be a letter to the Christian Community at Ephesus, in modern day Turkey, it was probably in its original form a letter to several Christian Communities.

A lot of important issues that are not addressed in the Gospels or are not dealt with very in depth. Family relationships is one of them. What we find in the Letters of Paul and Peter are codes of conduct for families or households. Where did they come from? Like the one in today's passage they were adapted from codes of conduct developed by Greco-Roman philosophers. New Testament authors used them to help in the moral instruction of the Christian faithful to deal with issues that were not well developed in the Gospels.

Remember that in Paul's day a family was a hierarchically ordered social unit. Christianity remained faithful to that model in response to the accusation that it was trying to undermine the social fabric of society at large by advocating equality. So the Letter to the Ephesians teaches that wives are subject to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters.

Did Christianity introduce any new element into the hierarchical model? Yes — the role of Jesus Christ and the love of Christ! The model for the husband/wife relationship is the relationship between Christ and the Church. The model for marital love is the way Christ loves the Church.

Questions for Discussion

1. In light of today's passage, how would you describe your relationship to your wife today?
2. Do you think of Christ's love for the Church as the model for the love that exists between you and your wife? If not, why not?
3. How would your wife respond to this reading?
4. How is a father and husband head of the family?
5. How would you describe the role of headship in today's society?