

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes March 12, 2008

Ephesians 5:1-20 (Part 3)

- 1: Therefore
 be imitators of God, as beloved children.
- 2: And walk in love,
 as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us,
 a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
- 3: But fornication and all impurity or covetousness
 must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints.
- 4: Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting;
 but instead let there be thanksgiving.
- 5: Be sure of this,
 that no fornicator or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater),
 has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.
- 6: Let no one deceive you with empty words,
 for it is because of these things
 that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
- 7: Therefore do not associate with them,
- 8: for once you were darkness,
 but now you are light in the Lord;
 walk as children of light
- 9: (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),
- 10: and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.
- 11: Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness,
 but instead expose them.
- 12: For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret;
- 13: but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible,
 for anything that becomes visible is light.
- 14: Therefore it is said,
 "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
 and Christ shall give you light."
- 15: Look carefully then how you walk,
 not as unwise men but as wise,
- 16: making the most of the time, because the days are evil.
- 17: Therefore do not be foolish,
 but understand what the will of the Lord is.
- 18: And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery;
 but be filled with the Spirit,
- 19: addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
 singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart,
 always and for everything giving thanks
- 20: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

Introduction: During this last week of Lent, many of us may need to boost up our efforts to prepare ourselves—our souls—for the upcoming Holy Week celebration of the death and resurrection of our Savior. We had good intentions—we even made resolutions to give up certain things or activities to strengthen our conscience and will and therefore our souls for the spiritual battle—but many of us fell short of following through. So what can we do if we still want to prepare ourselves? Well, nothing short of listening to good St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. This is part of what we'll be discussing today on *Deep in Scripture*.

House cleaning items...

- Today's Special: <http://www.ewtn.com/podcast/index.asp>
- We want your input!!! Phone: 740-450-1175
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REVIEW:

- **Today we're going to continue discussing Ephesians 5:1-20.**
 - In the first three chapters, St. Paul describes the changes that take place in our lives once we have heard, believed, and then were sealed with the Holy Spirit in baptism. Our relationship with God, with other baptized believers, and with ourselves is changed by grace. By grace we were saved from our old life / nature and made children of God, full members of His family, members of the Body of Christ, the Church.
 - In the second half of Ephesians, St. Paul exhorts the newly baptized that they now must live out this new life, which requires surrender and faithful obedience.
 - St. Paul summarizes this in verses 22-24,
*22: Put off your old nature
which belongs to your former manner of life
and is corrupt through deceitful lusts,
23: and be renewed in the spirit of your minds,
24: and put on the new nature,
created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*
 - From experience, St. Paul that baptized believers do not always act like baptized believers; baptism isn't magic; we must willfully abide / remain / continue in these graces.
- **So, living as a member of the Body of Christ, requires living like a member of the body of Christ.**
 - **What does this mean?** St. Paul describes this in the first two verses of today's text:
*"Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children.
And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*
 - As new born-again children of God, we are to imitate God our Father and love one another as Christ loved us;
- **So what does this entail?**
 - **In 4:25-5:2, St. Paul gave some "Rules" for dealing with conflict within the Body:**
 1. Keep it HONEST! (4:25)
 2. Keep it IN CONTROL! (4:26a, 31a)
 3. Keep it FRESH! (4:26b)
 4. Keep it CENTERED ON FORGIVENESS! (4:28, 32b)
 5. Keep it POSITIVE!(4:29, 32a)
 6. Keep it PRIVATE! (4:31b)
 7. Keep it CLEANED UP! (5:1-2)

- **How can these rules help us in these last days of Lent?**
 - In what ways are conflicts within our lives preventing us from growing closer to Jesus and to His Church?
 - Can we try, with the assistance of grace (*“apart from me you can do nothing!”*), to live by these rules for at least the next few days?
- **Then in verses 5:1-20, St. Paul turns his attention to another crucial aspect of getting along: **What does it mean to love one another.****
 - There really is nothing in these verses about living in love that we don’t already know:
 - Most of us recognize in our gut (conscience) that what St. Paul says here is obviously true;
 - Yet, partially because of the constant onslaught of our modern relativistic culture but maybe mostly because of our own sinfulness, we need to hear and follow these words from St. Paul.
 - And particularly in these last days of Lent: **How can I bring my life in line with these ways of loving that are fitting for baptized believers?**

(1) **Walking in (Agape) love means wholesome / pure Intimacy: (5:3)**

“But fornication and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints.”

- Behind this we hear the teaching of Jesus: Matthew 5:27-28, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*
 - Not just the acts but our inner attitudes / lusts.
 - In order to form our consciences, the Church has established rules for sexual behavior, based on Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and we have these readily available to us through the Catechism which is a summary of the official statements of the Church, expressed in councils, papal encyclicals, etc.
- **During these last days of Lent**, let us examine the purity of our relationships, and if necessary be obedient in our actions and our inner attitudes.

(2) **Walking in Agape love means wholesome / pure Language: (5:4)**

“Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving.”

- The newly baptized pagan Gentile believers needed to beware of bringing along with them into the Body of Christ inappropriate ways of talking & jesting that in their former life were acceptable.
- It’s not that humor is wrong, but rather inappropriate humor.
 - **Who decides?** Respect the rules of the home where you are ...
- The foundation of what is appropriate is built on “thanksgiving.”
- **During these last days of Lent**, can we get better control of our tongue?

James 3: 6-10, “And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue -- a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so.”

(3) Walking in Agape love means wholesome / pure company: (5:6-7)

***“Let no one deceive you with empty words,
for it is because of these things
that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
Therefore do not associate with them;”***

- The newly baptized Gentile believers will need to examine their attachments to old friends and even family who will try to dissuade & discourage them in their new life;
 - Their words are empty and lifeless, even though they may surge the emotions.
 - If we are not spiritually strong enough yet, then we must not associate with those who would pull us back into sin; in time, by grace, we may be able to be a witness; but if we fall back, as it indicates in Hebrews 6:4f, it becomes even harder to return.
- **During these last days of Lent**, in what ways do our attachments with people outside the Body pull us away from the Body?
 - Shouldn't we be bringing them to the Body?
 - But if we are unable to say “no” to their invitations, then shouldn't we be following St. Paul's warning and distance ourselves from them, while keeping them in our prayers?

But why must we live this way? What difference does it make?!

(4) Because these are contrary to the will of God for our lives: (5:5)

***“Be sure of this,
that no fornicator or impure man,
or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater),
has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”***

- This is a very strong denouncement of the “once saved—always saved” theology, because he is clearly warning baptized believers that they could lose their inheritance.
 - This is not really a Catholic vs Protestant issue because a large majority of non-Catholics also recognize the need to grow & remain in holiness for salvation;
 - Salvation is not a one time event, but a life-long journey by grace in faith;
- **During these last days of Lent**, if we want our heart & soul to be in line with the will of God, then we need to bring our lives in line with His will.

(5) Because these are contrary to our new natures: (5:8a)

***“...for once you were darkness,
but now you are light in the Lord...”***

- By baptism we have been changed, but as St. Paul pointed out earlier, we still must actively put off our old life / nature and put on the new.
- **During these last days of Lent**, in what ways are we still walking in our old ways of life, before we were baptized, or confirmed, or as adults received into the Church?

So far, these are the negatives, but what can we do positively?

▪ **Walk in the light (5:8b)**

“...walk as children of light

- Again, this specifically means imitating Jesus:
 - John 8:12, “Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*
 - John 12:35-36, “Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”*
 - John 13: 46, “I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”*

▪ **What does “walking in the light” mean?**

1. **Our lives ought to exude virtues: (5:9)**

“(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)”

Phil 4: 8-9, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.”

2. **We ought to seek to please God (5:10)**

“and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

3. **We need to say No! (5:11a)**

“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness...”

4. **We need to take a stand against immorality (5:11b-13)**

“but instead expose them.

For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light.”

○ **In these last days of Lent, these need to be the focus of our efforts:**

- Actively live the virtues, what is good, right, and true;
- Actively seek to please God;
- Actively turn from vice;
- If necessary, actively take a stand against immorality in your community.

Conclusion: Let us truly live by the new life / new birth of our baptism! (5:14)

“Therefore it is said,

‘Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.’”

- A mysterious, unidentifiable quote; possibly a lost Christian hymn.
- **Are we guilty of being “sleepers”?**
 - I’m first thinking of those who think that the easiest way to live out this way of life is to live in isolation! Avoid relationships! Lock oneself up in a room! But ask any person who is called to the religious life, getting thee to the nunnery does not mean a life of ease or absence of the spiritual battles. We need to live in our vocation.
 - Mostly, he is talking about those “sleepers” who live in lukewarmness; if we awake from this, he will give us the light / the grace to walk in obedience and joy.
- **In other words, right now, in these last few days of Lent,** we need to wake up, and live out our baptism, and not just for these next few days, but as a new trajectory for the rest of our lives.