

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes December 11, 2007

Ephesians 4:7-14 (Continued)

4: *There is one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call,
5: one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
6: one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

7: But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

8: *Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men."*

9: *(In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that
he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?*

10: *He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens,
that he might fill all things.)*

**11: And his gifts were that some should be apostles,
some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,**

12: to equip the saints for the work of ministry,

for building up the body of Christ,

13: *until we all attain to the unity
of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,
to mature manhood,
to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;*

14: *so that we may no longer be children,
tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,
by the cunning of men,
by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.*

15: *Rather, speaking the truth in love,
we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*

16: *from whom the whole body,
joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied,
when each part is working properly,
makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.*

Discussion:

- As we discussed previously, in chapters 1-3 St. Paul explains the three changes that happen in our lives by grace once we have heard, believed, and then been sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism.
 - Through baptism believers are changed by grace in three ways: "up, beside, and within"...
 - These changes have already happened, whether they are felt or not, BUT this is only the beginning! Though these changes are given freely by grace, the baptized must now live in them, also by grace.
- In Chapters 4-6, St. Paul gives instructions on how the newly baptized are now to live.
 - This second half of Ephesians begins with a call (4:1-3) "*to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"
 - Once St. Paul mentions their / our need to eagerly "maintain the unity of the Spirit," he goes on to enumerate in detail the key aspects of this unity (4:4-6): "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.*"

- In verses 7-16, St. Paul discusses how this unity is to be maintained, not in cookie-cutter uniformity or conformity, but includes, and in fact depends upon, grace filled, gifted diversity; not in what Christians are to believe, but in how they are to serve within and for the Church.
 - Therefore, the Church consists of two aspects: unity (communion) and diversity (service) [cf. Cantalamessa, pg. 58f].
 - The Sacraments and their graces are a part of the unity aspect: these graces are shared by all;
 - The charisms or grace gifts, of which St. Paul discusses here and elsewhere, are part of this diversity: each person experiences this in a unique way.
- God has established two distinct channels through which He sanctifies the Church:
 - From above through the channels of the Church, through the magisterium of the Church, the pope, bishops, and priests, through the sacraments, to the members of the Body.
 - Also, from below or within, the spirit “blows where it chooses” (John 3:8).
 - “All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (1 Cor 12:11).
 - To be complete, truly unified and as Paul describes in today's text (4:7-16), the Church needs both channels. At times in history, there have been imbalances in how these channels were appreciated / utilized...
 - The 2nd Vat Council recognized that importance of both these channels of grace:

Lumen Gentium:

12. The holy people of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office; it spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give praise to His name.(110) The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One,(111) cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith when "from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful" (8) they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God.(112) Through it, the people of God adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints,(113) penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life.*

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills,(114) He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit".(115) These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labor to be presumptuously expected from their use; but judgment as to their genuinity and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good.(116)

What is this unique calling to which each of us has been called?

- For each of us, this has these two same aspects:
 - One which we share with all Christians through baptism...
 - One unique to each of us, our personal calling: two aspects:
 - Our state of life: clergy, religious, laity, celibate, or married.
 - Our Personal unique calling to service.

Much of what St. Paul explains in the second half of Ephesians concerns the calling we all share by baptism:

- There is danger of listening only to St. Paul to discover or understand this...he presumed upon what they had already learned through oral teaching! (1 Cor 11:2; 15:1-3; 2 Thes 2:15).
 - The Ephesians did not have a New Testament!
 - No written gospels or epistles!
 - And probably no written Old Testament!
 - What had they primarily learned? The teachings of Jesus Christ!
 - So, to understand what St. Paul is saying, we must always understand behind it the teaching of Christ!
 - Jesus said much about discipleship: put hand to the plow, take up the cross...but where he most clearly explains what it means to be a disciple (the calling) was in his Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5

1: Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him.

2: And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

12: Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

13: "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.

14: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.

15: Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

16: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

17: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them.

18: For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

19: Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20: For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

48: You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 7

7: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

8: For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

9: Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?

10: Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?

11: If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

12: So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

15: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

16: You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?

17: So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit.

18: A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

19: Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20: Thus you will know them by their fruits.

21: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22: On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

23: And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'