

Bible Study # 10

11 17 15

1st Corinthians

11-15

Administrative Information

- The Bible Study Class will be presented in the parish hall every Tuesday morning from **9:30 A.M. until 11 A.M.** beginning September 15, 2015 and ending **May 24, 2016** except for the following Tuesdays related to a holiday:
 - **Nov 24, 2015 – Thanksgiving Week**
 - Dec 8, 2015 – Feast of the Immaculate Conception
 - Dec 22, 2015 – Christmas Week
 - Dec 29, 2015 - New Year's Week
 - Mar 22, 2016 – Holy Week
- The same class will be given every Tuesday evening from **7:30 until 9:00 P.M.** in the parish hall
- Contact info (703) 644-5873; email roberteward3@verizon.net
- Inclement weather decision will be based on Fairfax County Public School announcements

Review of last week

- Last week we looked at *1st Cor 11* which focused on the proper attire for women at the Mass and the appropriate behavior at the Lord's Supper
 - After congratulating the Corinthians for holding on to the traditions that he gave them he challenged them not to allow women to attend the Mass without covering their heads with a veil
 - We discovered that this was part of the cultural norms of the Greco-Roman world
 - It taught us that there is a great deal of difference within the Church between "doctrine" and "disciplines"

Review of last week

- The second question Paul addressed was in response to the problem that had arisen when members of the local congregation gathered in groups or cliques to celebrate the “love feast” or “agape meal” before during or after the Mass
- He gave them his understanding of the consecration for the Mass and his understanding of this being a part of the “new covenant”
- He concluded by proclaiming the seriousness any abuse of the Eucharistic liturgy

1ST Corinthians 12

Transition

- What is among the most well known and beloved passages in the letters of St Paul?
 - *1st Corinthians 13 “Love, the Heart of the Gifts ”**
- Many see this passage as a romantic definition of “love” and it is often chosen as part of the scriptures offered in a wedding Mass
- But what is really important is it’s location within the overall *1st Letter to the Corinthians* as it falls between Chapter 12 “Many Gifts, One Body” and Chapter 14 “The Gifts in Practice”

1ST Corinthians 12

- **1st Cor 12:1-3** *“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed....’Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.”*
 - Once again Paul is addressing **a new topic**, most likely from the issues discussed in the letter from *Chloes*
 - Most scholars agree that this section is about **“spiritual gifts”**

1ST Corinthians 12(Cont)

- **1st Cor 12:4-11** *“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;...All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”*
 - Paul tells the *Corinthians* that these “spiritual gifts” are not something that one produces on his own effort
 - Thus, they should not equate them with acquired skills
 - Also, they are not given primarily for the benefit of the individual, rather **they are for the good of the community**
 - “The manifestation of the Spirit” means that the gifts are visible, outward evidence of the work done by the Spirit

1ST Corinthians 12 (Cont)

- “Is given” indicates that the manifestation cannot be attributed to a natural talent, nor does it indicate that the receiver is a holy person who merited the gift
- This is important for us today because many Christians believe that the “**charisms**” are only for canonized Saints*
- Instead, they depend on God’s choice and generosity
- Next, follows a list which is not intended to be exhaustive of the gifts most commonly found in the early communities and in *Corinth* in particular

1ST Corinthians 12 (Cont)

- Paul explains that who gets what gift and when he or she gets, it is God's business and not the *Corinthians*
- And, that the spiritual gifts or charisms are first of all a manifestation of the life of the Trinity

1ST Corinthians 12 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 12:12-26** *“For just as the body is one and has many members,...If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”*
 - This is not a question of how many can be one, but how the one Christ can be many
 - This is based on what is **deeply rooted in Paul’s conversion** experience when Jesus asked him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”
 - To Paul, for us to become one, it is because each of us is joined sacramentally and bodily to the risen body of Christ
 - Paul again returns to the tendency of the *Corinthians* to form cliques as discussed in the beginning of this letter

1ST Corinthians 12 (Cont)

- He points out that as God willed for the human body to have many independent parts, so it is within the church, there is no unimportant member
- Paul stresses the importance of interdependence
- God's plan for unity is not uniformity but harmony
- Paul cautions them not to think that their specific gift is so important that they can do without the gifts of others

1ST Corinthians 12 (Cont)

- Then he suddenly shifts his thoughts to show not only that different parts are necessary and complementary but also that the parts may have the same concern for one another
- The quality of life within the body of Christ can be judged by how much care the stronger members have for the weaker

1ST Corinthians 12 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 12:27-31** *“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it....And I will show you a still more excellent way.”*
 - Finally, Paul arrives at the application for which he has set up the metaphor of the body
 - He tells them that **members of that community are members of the Body of Christ***
 - He is not saying that there is no hierarchy of gifts but that one and all should strive for the greater gifts

1ST Corinthians 12 (Cont)

- The diversity of gifts is based on God's determination which is of itself a gift
- He then explains how God has designated the different persons to have such gifts:
 - Apostles are those who are sent
 - Prophets are the speakers who were specially inspired by the Holy Spirit who had a recognized ministry

1ST Corinthians 12 (Cont)

Most of these are rhetorical questions expecting no answer
Suddenly he seems to skip a beat as he encourages them to seek the gift of prophecy

- Then he discusses the **most excellent way** for this to be done in **the next chapter on “love” (1st Cor 13)**

1ST Corinthians 13

1ST Corinthians 13

- “Love”
 - I love
 - my girlfriend from college
 - the men in my platoon
 - my best friend who needs my help
 - my career
 - chocolate ice cream
 - the Washington Nationals baseball team

1ST Corinthians 13 (Cont)

- Three of at least five biblical names in Greek for “love”:
 - *Eros*
 - *Philos*
 - *Agapeo*
- Look at *John 21:15-19*
- In every use of the word “love” in Paul’s Epistles he uses *Agapeo*
- Every time Jesus uses the word “love” in the Synoptic Gospels, except for Jn 21, he uses the word *Agapeo*
- One more “I love”
 - My wife and family – over the years they have grown into all three

1ST Corinthians 13 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 13:1-3** *“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels,...but have not love, I gain nothing.”*
 - Some scholars believe that Paul’s “I” here stands for a hypothetical person as he has already used his own example as a means of persuading the *Corinthians*
 - Paul views prophecy as the gift most to be desired, and it also is meant to foster **love in the community** and in the one who exercises it
 - It is hard to imagine how one might give away everything one owns and have not love
 - He is not thinking only of the great acts of philanthropy but also of reducing oneself to poverty to help others

1ST Corinthians 13 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 13:4-7** *“Love is **patient** and kind; ...endures all things.”*
 - This section begins with **two positive traits of love** and then lists **eight faults** that it is not and is followed by five positive traits
 - **Love here is personified** and many commentators point out that these are **traits of Jesus**
 - In the Greek, Paul expresses **each trait as a verb** to show that **love is active**

1ST Corinthians 13 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 13:8-13** *“Love never ends;...So faith, hope, love abides, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*
 - Paul states that there is no difference between **agape love in this life and in the life to come**
 - Here it is obscured by faith
 - There in the brilliance of the vision
 - He shows that it is important to distinguish between delightful love and sacrificial love, yet both are from God
 - Agape love is a unique combination of the two
 - He says that the **“perfect” will banish the “partial”** in that the beatific vision will encompass all that the partial arrived at, and then offer even more

1ST Corinthians 13 (Cont)

- He next introduces two examples of the partial and the perfect:
 - The first is the contrast between an image of a child and that of an adult
 - The immature *Corinthians* needing milk while the mature Christians can eat solid food
 - Then he contrasts their seeing indistinctively as in a mirror versus seeing face to face
 - Insights into the mysteries of God are observed partially, imperfectly and obscurely in this life but we will see them face to face in the next

1ST Corinthians 13 (Cont)

- Although we know God imperfectly in this life, he knows us perfectly, and while our knowledge of him can never be infinite, as is his knowledge of himself, in the next life we will know him and ourselves in him as he has known us all along
- Those who hear this verse at a wedding ordinarily find its beautiful conclusion about love but they rarely notice the problems it creates in light of the entire previous passage
- This **theme does not end** with *1 Cor 13* which is a transition between the message in *1 Cor 12* and *1 Cor 14*

1ST Corinthians 14

1ST Corinthians 14

- **1st Cor 14:1-12** *“Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy....So with yourselves; since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.”*
 - In *1st Cor 12* Paul deals with the **charisms from a theological point of view:**
 - How to identify their source
 - Their unity and diversity
 - How they are related to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the body of Christ

1ST Corinthians 14 (Cont)

- In *1st Cor 13* he **deals with love**, which is what motivates and **gives value to the charisms**, since it is love that builds up
- In *1st Cor 14* he gives practical directives aimed at restoring and preserving order in the worshiping community, where some have created a chaotic situation because of their unenlightened enthusiastic and insensitivity to good order
- Paul's advice to pursue love indicates that *agape* is not something that develops automatically; one must work at it, better to pursue it (like a foot race)

1ST Corinthians 14 (Cont)

- Paul places such importance on the spiritual gifts and his desire for everyone to seek them is because they are needed for the building of the Church
- They are the equipment of all the faithful for living out their mission given them at their baptism
- **Prophecy** is a word gift which is especially helpful for **building the church** and Paul sees it as superior to speaking in tongues
- Paul stresses it above all other gifts
- In its broadest sense, **prophecy is speech inspired by the Holy Spirit**

1ST Corinthians 14 (Cont)

- Prophecy, which is superior to tongues, is the **primarily exhortation** (addressed to human beings) **that is for**
 - Building up
 - Encouragement
 - Solace
- Paul urges the *Corinthians* to seek more eagerly prophecy because of its ability to build up the church

1ST Corinthians 14 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 14:13-19** *“Therefore, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret....nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than then thousand words in a tongue.”*
 - The custom in the Jewish synagogues to answer “**amen**” to a public prayer has come over into the Christian assembly
 - Amen derives from the Hebrew verb meaning to be firm, established, and is the expression of total agreement and solid commitment to what was proclaimed in prayer

1ST Corinthians 14 (Cont)

- Throughout this argument Paul has been careful not to denigrate the gift of tongues when compared to prophecy as both are gifts of the Spirit
- He thanks God for his ability to speak in tongues as a way to show his link to the 12 Apostles at Pentecost (*Acts 2: 4*)
- He is also concerned with the effect of interpreting tongues on those who are not members of the community

1ST Corinthians 14 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 14: 20-25** *“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature...the secrets of the heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.”*
 - Paul **differentiates between being childlike and being childish**
 - He argues that their putting emphasis on tongues as being a higher gift than the other word gifts is an example of childish or immature thinking which often resulted in the formation of cliques
 - He calls them to be innocent like infants, but in their thinking to be mature

1ST Corinthians 14 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 14:26-33a** *“What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation....For God is not God of confusion but of peace”*
 - As usual after teaching on a topic Paul concludes with what is to be done
 - The list of activities is not exhaustive, but it gives some idea of the kinds of sharing done at the assembly
 - **Singing a hymn**
 - **A lesson** (instruction or teachings) would be less spontaneous and require some knowledge of Scripture and the Apostolic Tradition

1ST Corinthians 14 (Cont)

- A **revelation** would mean some kind of direct divine communication such as a vision or verbal inspiration
- **Speaking in tongues**
- An **interpretation** is an explanation of what a person had spoken in tongues
- The same rule that holds for **prophecies** should be followed by the gift of discernment
- Since Paul established an authority structure seven years earlier with the *Thessalonians*, it is unthinkable that he would not have done so here

1ST Corinthians 14 (Cont)

- **1st Cor 14:33b-40** “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches...but all things should be done decently and in order.”
 - Some scholars believe that this was inserted later to combat some kind of disorder such as ***Montanism***,* in which women had a prominent role