

Lesson Five: Ephesians 2:11-22

Peace

There's so much here between our scripture verses for this week's lesson and our Catechism chapter that I'm not even sure where to begin! The Paschal Mystery, the revelations that bring clarity to some of Christ's more perplexing teachings, the discrepancies between the promises and the hope of our future with Christ and the realities of this world, the physical and spiritual presence and realities of God's Church—it's all here. So much to cover, and so little time. We'd better get started.

Read 2:11-22.

Before Christ: enemies

In this second chapter of Ephesians, Paul is reminding the Gentile Christians of their spiritual state prior to their conversion to Christianity. They were the "uncircumcised" in the eyes of the "circumcised"—part of the majority of the population who were previously excluded from the privileges bestowed on God's chosen people. In 2:12, Paul lists five ways the Gentiles had been left out. What are they? (See Q#1a. on pg. 44) What was your response to Q#1b. and Q#2?

In Christ: reconciled

Share your responses to Q#3-4.

"For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility..."

I don't know about you, but the first time I read through this, all I could think was—Peace? Are you kidding me? True, I know that I experience the peace of Christ within me, but as God's people, we are hardly one—even among fellow Catholics or with other Christians, much less Jews or people of other faiths. In fact, you could argue that Jesus Christ brought even more division to the world. He said so himself, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword." (Matthew 10:34) I read on.

*"...by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he **might** create in himself, one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and **might** reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end."*

So, Christ has done all the heavy lifting to make this peace possible—through the Paschal Mystery—to make us One Body—The Church. But wait a minute. Didn't God just replace one small group of chosen people, the Israelites, with a much larger group of chosen people, Christians? Isn't the exclusion of everyone else what causes more hostility?

This very question is addressed in the Catholic Commentary on Ephesians by referring to a book written by Pope Benedict XVI, then Joseph Ratzinger, entitled, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*. In it, Ratzinger argues that "though men are not yet brothers in Christ they can and must become so." Our call to brotherly love with our fellow Christians is not exclusionary, but should include all men. Our separation as Christians is not an end in itself, but a means to reach out and save all mankind. It is our duty as people who are already members of this New Body to reach out to the rest of the human race "by proclaiming the gospel, by works of charity, and by suffering that is united to Jesus' paschal mystery."

And how's this for Paschal Mystery? All of this is accomplished "*through the cross*." An object of torture and death, humility and shame is what make all this peace and brotherly love

possible. Incredible.

Discuss your responses to Q#5-6. The title for this lesson is “Peace,” but it could also have been called, “The Church.” As you read 2:19-22, what are some of the things that you may recognize in these verses that describe several of the fundamental beliefs we hold about the Catholic Church? Many of these beliefs are explained in the sections of this week’s Catechism lesson that answer the questions: *Who celebrates? How Do We Celebrate? When Do We Celebrate? Where Do We Celebrate?*

Let’s go through our responses to Q#7-10.

USCC for Adults—Chapter 14: The Celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ (Beginning of Part II: The Sacraments: The Faith Celebrated)

Critics of organized religion will often argue that it was never Jesus’ intention to start a Church as part of his legacy. I would argue that anyone who believes that to be true simply does not know scripture. Jesus is God. He doesn’t need anyone else to accomplish his purpose and yet, all along the way, he includes Man. Why would God hinge salvation on the “yes” of a young girl? Why did Jesus gather the Apostles? Why would he give them the power to heal and forgive sins? Why would he give Peter the Keys to the Kingdom? Why the Last Supper?

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was laying the cornerstone of the foundation of his Church. He knew we needed one another. He knew we needed real signs of God’s work. And so we have liturgy and the sacraments. While a good share of this chapter was probably review for most of you, was there anything that you may have read about liturgy or the Sacraments that stood out?

I hope that you are all reading what you can about the changes that are about to be implemented in our liturgy. This might sound funny, but I’m looking forward to really having to pay close attention to what’s going on during Mass. Familiarity can sometimes make us lazy participants.

11/17/2011

Our next meeting will be on December 8 when we will discuss **Lesson 6: Ephesians 3:1-13 Paul’s Mission** and **Chapter 15 of the USCC for Adults Baptism: Becoming A Christian (CCC, Nos. 1210-1284)**

- December 8 is a Holy Day of Obligation, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. There should be Mass that morning at 8AM. This Mass will likely take a bit longer than the usual morning Mass, but we should still be able to get started at 9AM.

- Our December 8 meeting is also our last meeting before we take our Christmas break. (Our next meeting will be January 19.) It has become our custom to go out to lunch after this meeting. I hope everyone will be able to make it.