

Lesson Twelve: Galatians 6:11-18 and Review Focusing on the Eternal

The wrong reasons (6:11-13)

Read 6:11-13. Discuss your responses to Q#2. We tend to vilify the Judaizers, but isn't it possible that there were some who were advocating adherence to Judaic Law out of a genuine concern for the salvation of the Gentiles? Good intentions or not, they were mistaken and were leading people down the wrong path.

Look at Q#3-4 and the questions "for thought and discussion" in the margin on the left. Sin can be so insidious. Even when we think we might be doing the right things for the right reasons, we too may be going down the wrong path. Last time we talked about the trap we can fall into if we compare ourselves to other people—"Gosh, I'm not so bad." Developing a spiritual self awareness is essential in our conversion as Christians.

So, how do we develop spiritual self awareness? How do we learn to honestly and critically evaluate our own motivations for the things that we think, say, and do? And how do we continue to transform ourselves into the saints we are destined to become? In addition to prayer—which is always the first and best answer—we can also seek out and implement some of the time-honored practices of our faith. For example, even today many Christians use a form of reflection developed way back in the 16th century by St. Ignatius Loyola—founder of the Jesuits—known as the Daily Examen. St. Ignatius prescribed five steps of meditation to be completed at least once, preferably twice, a day in order to become more intentional about living as we ought and being more aware of how God works in our lives.

Another part of developing spiritual self awareness is learning to recognize our own faults and failings, and then, rather than despairing over the fact that we commit the same sins over and over again, we can begin to understand why we continue to make the same mistakes and work to overcome those faults. In past meetings, we've talked about what some spiritual writers have called "root sin". The three root sins have been described as pride, vanity, and sensuality. Proponents believe that while everyone is guilty of all three, there is one that—depending on our personality and experiences—exerts the greatest influence. Once we begin to recognize our own sinful tendencies, we are better able to develop the virtues needed to combat those temptations.

The reason I wanted take the time to mention this today is that since we now have the entire summer ahead of us, it might be a good time to explore some of these traditional practices of our faith. We can all fall into a "worship rut" now and then, so it's a good idea to shake things up once in a while and get a different perspective on our spiritual advancement. Some people are fortunate to have a spiritual director to help—and that might also be something you would like to look into—but if not, making the effort to learn more about these tools for developing our spiritual self awareness can be a very practical way of further advancing to sainthood.

The right reasons (6:14-17)

Read 6:14-17. Discuss your responses to Q#5-7. The phrase "new creation" is rich with meaning. What does it mean to you? At the end of the novel *The Diary of a Country Priest*, the dying words of the priest (hope I'm not spoiling the novel for anyone) are, "All is grace." How do you think that applies to this section at the end of Paul's letter to the Galatians?

Review

During the year, as we dissect each small portion of the scripture we are studying, we run the risk of losing the big picture. A review at the end of the year is an excellent way to step back and put that big picture into focus. My advice would be to take a few moments to read over

Q#8-10 and then re-read Paul's letter to the Galatians from start to finish before you go back and write your responses to those questions. Let's go over Q#8-10.

Great job everyone! I know that there are tons of other things that tug on your time, so I appreciate that you make Bible study one of your priorities.

USCC for Adults Chapter 10 The Church: Reflecting the Light of Christ

USCC for Adults (CCC 748-810)

1. Various spiritual writers have considered different historical events to be the "birth of the Church": Mary's fiat, Peter declared "the rock", the Last Supper, the moment Christ's side was pierced on the cross and blood and water flowed out symbolizing baptism and Eucharist, and Pentecost. In a way, this demonstrates how all of the members of the Church play a role in bringing about divine life—yes, even you and me. What are the three offices in Christ to which we are called through baptism? Describe briefly what each one entails.
2. Today there are many people who say that they are "spiritual, but not religious" indicating an underlying distaste for organized religion. Well, it doesn't work that way in the Catholic Church. The Church is people! (Poor phrasing, but you get what I mean.) In order to lead and serve people, you have to have some kind of organization. What does our catechism lesson say about the reality of the institutional side of the Church? In our last discussion, I mentioned that we shouldn't always judge Catholicism by Catholics. Do you think that we have done a good job in conveying the truth about the visible/invisible, physical/spiritual, and the active/contemplative aspects of the Church to others—or even to members within the Church?

4/21/2011

Two weeks from today on May 5, let's meet at the Baker's Square in Riverdale for our annual end-of-year breakfast. It's always fun to be able to visit before we all go our separate ways for the summer. If you can't make it, I hope you have a great summer, and I also hope to see you back here to study Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Our first meeting will be on Thursday, September 8 @9:00 when we will discuss *The Great Divorce*.