

# The Year of St. Paul

## The Second Letter to the Corin-



### **Call to Generosity and Unity**

*Chapters 8 & 9* These next two chapters finds St. Paul asking the Corinthians to support the Church in Jerusalem. As we can see in various chapters in Acts, the relations between Jews and Christians in Jerusalem were very much strained and often times violently so. It is most likely the Christians in Jerusalem were being persecuted which meant they were in need of material and spiritual support.

To ask for support for the Jerusalem church was important in another way in that there were often strained relationships between Jewish Christians, found primarily in Jerusalem, and Gentile Christians, who were outside of Jerusalem such as the majority of Christians in Corinth. Some of the Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, called Judaizers, believed that Gentile Christians had to follow the Jewish Law, such as circumcision, in order to be Christian. St. Paul vehemently disagreed and this caused great friction between St. Paul and the Judaizers as they traveled to the various churches established by St. Paul trying to undermine his authority.

After a time it became clear that the Church had to resolve these conflicts with authority or the Church would be torn apart. This led to the first Church Council. As we can see in Acts 15, the Apostles and other leaders of the Church met at Jerusalem to give answers to these questions and the decision of the council had to be observed by all the churches. After the pattern of the Council of Jerusalem, the Catholic Church has held 21 Ecumenical Councils beginning with Nicaea I in 325 with the most recent being Vatican II in 1962.

In asking the Gentile Christians in Corinth to support the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem was a statement that the Church is one throughout the world and we are to support one another. It is important to note that St. Paul never commands the Corinthians to give to others nor does he state that any certain percentage of income must be applied to their charity. Rather, a higher means test is appealed to and that is the test of their love for others and the example of Christ who became poor for our sake so that we may become rich in spirit and eternal life. While St. Paul reminds the Corinthians that God will reward a cheerful giver

he bases giving on love and the example of Christ. It would be wrong to give to others because we expect to be compensated by God in return. Such a notion reduces our relationship with God as a loving Father to one of an employer from whom we expect a wage for services rendered. When we give out of love we should not expect compensation, rather, we should trust in the promise of God and his Divine Providence that he knows our needs and will provide for us. In these uncertain economic times it is good to remember that the gifts of our loving Father are more dependable than the wages of an employer.

## GOD FIRST

*Year Three, Part 26*

**January 25, 2009**

### **Points to Ponder:**

*Do we perceive the Church as being confined to our parish? Where can we look to understand the universal nature of the Church?*

*Do we look upon our possessions as something we have gained all by ourselves or do we see them as gifts from God who has given us the gift of life and the talents and abilities necessary to have any possessions at all?*

### **Weak Yet Strong**

*Chapter 10:* St. Paul again turns back to defending himself against those who seek to tear him down in the eyes of the Corinthians. Those who are seeking to undermine his authority are saying he talks tough in his letters but, in reality, he is weak and fainthearted. On the contrary, St. Paul shows that his life as an apostle is much like warfare. That his life, as it should be for all Christians, is not one of easy comfort. He promises to act boldly when confronting those who are lying about him and attacking him using the spiritual weapons of God rather than the worldly weapons of human motives being used by his

detractors. St. Paul is declaring all out spiritual warfare against those who seek to lead the Corinthians astray. He makes clear that this is not a boast of his own initiative but of his rights given him as an apostle. Unlike his detractors, he points to his success in preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles through which many converts to Christ have been gained.

*Chapter 11:* St. Paul asks for at least the same treatment from the Corinthians that they give to those who seek to undermine him and compares himself to a father who has betrothed the Church at Corinth as a bride to Christ. Yet, he fears that like Eve they are being deceived by the evil one and turning away from the Christ to whom they were betrothed. As a concerned father he lays it on the line and calls his detractors false apostles, deceitful workers and masquerade apostles. It seems those who are causing him problems in Corinth are indeed Judiazers who boast they are Hebrews, Israelites and descendants of Abraham. Being a Jew, St. Paul responds, "So am I."

*Chapter 12:* In the midst of a very confrontational portion of this letter is a non specific yet very personal admission by St. Paul. In listing his accomplishments for the Gospel as well as visions and revelations he has received from Christ, he admits to a particular affliction "a thorn in the flesh" which he has asked the Lord to take away from him on three occasions. But God's response was that his grace was sufficient and that true power is perfected by weakness.

### ***Points to Ponder:***

*How can our acknowledged weaknesses make us more aware of and dependant upon God's grace?*

*When we understand that our strength comes from God even though we are weak, how should this develop our understanding and growth in the virtue of humility?*

*Are we honest enough with ourselves to acknowledge what our weaknesses are?*

*Chapter 13:* St. Paul concludes his letter by promising to visit them soon to clear up the difficulties mentioned throughout this letter. He seems to acknowledge that this visit will not be pretty in many respects. But he reminds the Corinthians that Christ is in them and that they must continually self examine themselves that their lives reflect the life of Christ within them. And then he closes by bestowing upon them the blessing which every Catholic should be well familiar. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you."

### ***Points to Ponder:***

*Where have we heard that final blessing before?*

*Do we realize that the majority of the Mass is taken directly from Scripture?*

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