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*Fifth in the series*

*Division of  
Evangelization and  
Catechesis*

*Archdiocese  
Of  
Baltimore*

**Discipleship** is the call of all baptized Christians. We will always be disciples, never the teacher. Jesus is the only Teacher. All through our lives we are simply through our words and example showing people what it means to be a good disciple. Paul understood this very well when he wrote what some would call his greatest “letter”, the Letter to the Romans. In this treatise, he was not only introducing himself to the community that he wished to visit next on his journey but he was also outlining what we Christians live and breathe every day of our lives. He lays out clearly the significance of Jesus Christ to the world.

**Where to Start** If someone were to ask me where to start reading this letter, I for one would suggest reading chapter eight first. It is a beautiful chapter on life in the Holy Spirit. It ends with one of the most hopeful statements, *“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in our Lord Jesus Christ.* From there head to chapters 12 - 15 in which he calls us to love one another and exhorts us to live in Christ Jesus. During the coming days of Lent, we could do well to just focus on those chapters and verses, God loves us and we are called to live our lives like God and love one another.



This one concept is a common thread throughout most major religions. Paul would have been formed in the Judaic teaching, “That which is hateful to you do not do to others.” Early Christians learned from the Gospels to, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto to you.” Muslims are taught, “None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.” Buddhists grow with the understanding to, “Hurt not others in ways you yourself would find hurtful.” Hindus hold, “Do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you.” And from the Native American traditions we hear, “All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves. All is really One.” Paul writing in Romans beautifully calls us to respect each other as equal members of one body. “. . . So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Rm 12:5) He suggests that we are more than one

family. We are intimately connected to each other through the Incarnation. When I sin, we all suffer and when I receive grace, we all grow closer to the love of God. In vs. 10 he calls us to “Honor one another above yourselves.” He calls this “sincere love.” (vs. 9) We do this not for our own benefit but, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rm 15:5-6) Shockingly, Paul tells us that ultimately it is not all about us but about giving glory to God.

**Reflection:** (These questions are opportunities for small group discussions or personal reflections.)

Read: Romans 12: 9-21

1. When you were a child, how did you settle arguments between your brothers and sisters or close friends?
2. Of the commands listed in verses 9-21, which are the easiest for you to keep? Which the most difficult? Why?
3. During this Lent, how can you practice “love” and “peace” with your family? Your co-workers?



**Continue Reading** One of the most difficult ideas that Paul addresses is found beginning in Chapter 5, the idea of justification by faith alone. This has been an arguing point between Catholics and Protestants for centuries. During the time of the Reformation apparently Catholics believed that you could earn salvation by good works (or worse could buy it with buying an indulgence.) Protestants taught that salvation was a free gift of God that required nothing else. In reality both arguments were incomplete. Paul does teach in Romans that salvation is a free gift of God but also insists that we live out that faith by living a life of good works. Christian freedom is not the choice to do whatever we want but to do God’s will freely because it is the right thing to do. If we accept the Lord Jesus Christ, He will transform our lives.

**Facts about the Letter to the Romans:**

1. Written around 57-58 A.D. probably from Corinth.
2. The author is most probably St. Paul himself and is accepted as his last letter.
3. Even though it is his last letter, it is placed first in the New Testament because Paul’s letters are arranged from the longest to the shortest.
4. Themes are: justification by faith, Christian freedom, the Law under Christ, the Holy Spirit, Christ the new Adam, and the fate of Israel.



**Prayer**

**Gracious God, Lord of us All,  
transform us through Your Son Jesus.  
Fill us with Your grace that we may  
step forward to do Your will in this world.  
May we not shrink from the task  
at hand. In this time of struggle  
and distress, may we be to each other  
a source of strength and support. May  
our very lives be a source of glory and  
honor to You. Amen!**