

March – April 2010

***Lectio Divina* with St. Paul: The Letter to the Romans**

Paul's Letter to the Romans

The Letter to the Romans is seen as the most comprehensive treatment of Paul's understanding of the Gospel. In a sense, we can see in this letter an overview of the message Paul preached in his missionary activity. It describes the content of Paul's evangelization – the good news which he brought to others in the name of Christ.

The Letter to the Romans is unique in that it is addressed to a community which Paul did not found through his preaching. He was not sent as a missionary to the Roman community of Christians. He wrote to them as a way of introducing himself and his approach to the Gospel. Paul also wanted to enlist the help of the Church of Rome in his plan to evangelize the western edge of the Roman Empire – Spain. Paul was looking ahead to carry the Good News to all parts of the Empire. We know that he was never able to carry out this plan. His journey to Jerusalem before his planned trip to Rome led to conflict and to his arrest. When Paul finally got to Rome, he entered the city as a prisoner in chains.

We have been buried with Christ by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

(Rom 6, 4)

Montfort at Pontchâteau

The experience which the people had at the Calvary of Pontchâteau was an experience of both physical and spiritual nourishment and sharing. Those who were able brought food and tools to help in the effort of construction. Among those who joined in the effort were the poor, who did not have any food to bring. Through his own efforts and the willingness of others to share what they had, Father de Montfort was able to feed a large number of the poor who would have died of hunger without his help.

At the same time there was a sharing of spiritual nourishment. The people participated in singing hymns and in spiritual discussions. The excellent preaching of Father de Montfort provided a feast for the spirits of the workers. Preaching was also featured in the planning for the blessing of the Calvary. There were to be preachers at the four corners of the Calvary, representing the universality of preaching in all the corners of the earth. The images planned for Pontchâteau were to serve as a feast of scriptural stories.

This balance between care for the spirit and care for the body stemmed from the holistic approach St. Louis took in his ministry. He sought to bring the good news not to disembodied spirits but to human beings of flesh and blood. This concern to care for people in their entire reality was another expression of Father de Montfort's incarnational spirituality which always found an expression in his mission.

Whatever our age, we discover, through an effort of ongoing conversion, the missionary dynamism that inhabits each one of us. We are called to be missionaries up to the end (2 Tim 2, 8-10).

*Walking Together
... towards a new missionary thrust
for the world of today
(General Chapter 2005)*

Suggested Passages for Daily *Lectio Divina*

Rom 1, 1-15	Rom 6, 1-11	Rom 9, 19-33	Rom 14, 1-6
Rom 1, 16-17	Rom 6, 12-23	Rom 10, 1-4	Rom 14, 7-9
Rom 1, 18-25	Rom 7, 1-6	Rom 10, 5-13	Rom 14, 10-13
Rom 1, 26-32	Rom 7, 7-13	Rom 10, 14-21	Rom 14, 14-18
Rom 2, 1-11	Rom 7, 14-25	Rom 11, 1-6	Rom 14, 19-23
Rom 2, 12-16	Rom 8, 1-4	Rom 11, 7-12	Rom 15, 1-6
Rom 2, 17-29	Rom 8, 5-8	Rom 11, 13-21	Rom 15, 7-13
Rom 3, 1-8	Rom 8, 9-13	Rom 11, 22-24	Rom 15: 14-17
Rom 3, 9-20	Rom 8, 14-17	Rom 11, 25-32	Rom 15, 18-24
Rom 3, 21-31	Rom 8, 18-23	Rom 11, 33-36	Rom 15, 25-33
Rom 4, 1-8	Rom 8, 24-27	Rom 12, 1-2	Rom 16, 1-16
Rom 4, 9-17	Rom 8, 28-30	Rom 12, 3-8	Rom 16, 17-24
Rom 4, 18-25	Rom 8, 31-34	Rom 12, 9-21	Rom 16, 25-27
Rom 5, 1-11	Rom 8, 35-39	Rom 13, 1-7	
Rom 5, 12-17	Rom 9, 1-13	Rom 13, 8-10	
Rom 5, 18-21	Rom 9, 14-18	Rom 13, 11-14	

Some Suggested Questions for Reflection

In the first section of the letter, Paul stresses the importance of faith for salvation. How have your efforts to help others grow in faith challenged you to deepen your faith?

Romans 8 is a meditation on our life in the Spirit who sets us free. No obstacle can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. What obstacles have you experienced in your life as a missionary? How have you experienced God's presence as you faced those obstacles?

Romans 10: 5 ff. talks about the importance of those who are sent to preach to message of the Gospel. What is your experience of being sent to bring the Good News to others? What is the role of preaching in your life right now? How has this ministry called you to growth?

At the end of the Letter to the Romans (Rom 15 & 16) Paul asks to pray for his future missionary activities (his planned trip to Spain, his journey to Jerusalem). He then greets a long list of people who collaborated with him. Who are the Montfortian collaborators and associates whom you have come to know in your ministry? How have they helped you to grow as a missionary?

Moving to Action

In what ways can your reflections lead to action – either your own personal action or the corporate action of your local community / your group? Here are some suggestions, but you might think of others that fit your context. For example ...

-Develop a plan to show appreciation to those who collaborate with you in the mission. Choose one specific way to share Montfortian spirituality with them.

-What is one way you can continue to develop your abilities as a preacher or as one who shares the Good News with others?