

Text: Romans 12: 1-8

Theme: "Present Your Bodies as a Living Sacrifice"

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ. Amen

The text for meditation for this morning is from the Epistle to the Romans which was read before. Let us pray: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." Amen

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St. Paul in our text focuses upon transformation. With transformation in Christ comes renewal of mind. This grows into wisdom, discernment and living-out the new life Christ Himself gives. You see with eyes of faith, even if all of your senses contradict Jesus. Something new or different in life may bother you. You do not like it. It upsets you. Therefore, you conclude this new thing must be bad.

Not so; emotions are not very trustworthy. Sometimes God tests us in such ways to deepen our faith and trust in Him; rather, search the Scriptures. Take Jesus at His Word. He may tear you to pieces but He will also heal you. He gives you eyes of faith to fixate upon Him and not just feelings.

The apostle Paul exhorts us to transform ourselves in Christ every day of the week: twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. As we say: 24/7. Paul urges us; beg us to present our bodies as living sacrifices; to be transformed, to be Christians 24/7. Paul uses a word that was used to encourage the troop to enter the battle. It is very difficult to encourage the troop to enter a battle - to face death - if they do not know why they are fighting for or why they are at war. For everything we need motivation, something that encourages us to enter the long struggle against sin. And Paul gives us that reason, he says, "by the mercies of God."

The prophet Jeremiah tells us that "God's mercy, His compassion for the sinner who does not deserve anything are new every morning." Each day the Lord gives us clothes, food, house, and other things. Each day, God covers us with the comforting blanket of free forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

We do not deserve the mercies of God because we are sinners and turn away from His path and choose our own paths that lead us to strange places. We are the ones who on Sundays we sing praises to God, confess His holy name, and suddenly we changed during the week doing un-Christian things. But it is precisely for our weaknesses that the mercies of God are eternal and comforting. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He suffered the punishment for all the sins that man had done and will do in the future.

The forgiveness of God is as a blanket, which completely covers us in a cold night. Every day we see such mercy of God. We see His love and protection in our lives. And most importantly, He assures us our eternal home where we will live forever.

So, we fix our eyes in His love and mercy. God now wants us to "fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim.6:12). Let us and thank Him for all He has given us in His mercy. He promises us to be with us at every step of our journey. He gives us strength to fight in this world that every day moves away from the sound teaching and doctrine.

God tells us through the author of the letter to the Hebrews, that the Christian life is like a race. It is a race of endurance, more like a marathon than like a sprint. It is a race which is begun in Holy Baptism, and run each and every day after that. It is a race in which we are sustained by the living water of the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us to run through the preaching of the Word, and through the eating of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper.

And it is a race that one day will end, when by God's grace we will cross the finish line when our earthly life comes to an end. Now while that is an easy picture to keep in your mind, it is not such an easy thing to do. Because sometimes we get tired of running this race, and we just want to sit down, give up, and do other things that do not cause us pain or troubles. The reality is that sometimes we lose our way. For in this race, in this life, there are hills to climb, obstacles to negotiate, narrow paths to follow, and rocks and mud to slow you down.

Paul Exhorts to keep going in this world despite obstacles that we face in life. It is not easy to give the other cheek when somebody has offended you with his or her words. But, through Jesus Christ you can forgive and move on with your life, and it is how you are transformed in Jesus Christ. It is not done by you, but Christ who lives in you.

When God gave us faith, a transformation occurred in us. God is really the One who started the war within us. Before being a believer there was no a fight against sin. We were in darkness going our own way, and we were acting in a selfish manner, but But through the Word and Sacraments, the Holy Spirit has entered into our hearts. Now the Trinity is in us and is constantly fighting against our sinful nature and the sinful world, and the war that we are fighting will end until God calls us to heaven.

You may be aware that there is a war in Libya. It is started 6 months ago. The people of this country are fighting against a dictator named Gaddafi who has been in power for 41 years. The people who started this fight against this dictator knew that the war would be a long struggle to reach power. At the beginning of the war they had no combat experience. They suffered many defeats, but now, they gradually have adapted, learned from their mistakes and now are better prepared for a long war to defeat this dictator.

You and I as believers in Christ must be prepared for a long and difficult fight against sin. Being a Christian does not mean that we have become perfect and free from temptations. Yes, we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and God has given us heaven as our final home, but we are still in the struggle here in this world - a struggle that will last until we die or God comes to judge us.

My dear friends in Christ; we must never be conformed to the ways of the world as a pattern of living. Jesus' sacrifice reveals our desperate need for sin's daily removal. We may not feel sinful, but we are, to the core of our being, body and soul; stained with sin

like the dirtiest tea-towel. The very fabric of our flesh is woven with evil thoughts, words and deeds. One may wish to age gracefully, but we must never age gracefully in sin. You are transformed by Christ. The Law that nailed Him to the cross pins you to the cross as well.

You are dead, immovable and crushed. You cannot help yourself anymore than a dead corpse can live. You do live, that's the miracle of it all. You are thoroughly renovated, with new life breathed into your lungs. The breath of the Spirit wakes you up, and you walk with new steps in the Saviour Who leads you to His door; the door to His table. Where your faith has already been tested through loving discipline and the Law's cutting blade. Now Jesus lifts you up to eat and drink from Himself; the Rock as Jesus calls Himself in the Gospel of today.

He says to us: "Take and eat, take and drink." You are ready and prepared by believing that Holy Communion is given and shed to forgive all your sins. The Apostle Paul exhorts us, as well, in our text to live in mutual love and harmony with one another. And St. Paul compares us this relationship with the perfect coordination of the human body. Eyes, ears, hands and feet are constantly in perfect coordination.

They all help each other, and love each other. This body receives life from the head; Jesus Christ, and all the members of this body engage in serving the church members. And when all work in harmony and in unity we can see great accomplishment in life especially in the church.

For example; yesterday morning, members from Grace went to Tillsonburg and Rhineland churches to bring church items donated to Grace. Seven people went to both places and put all these things inside a truck, and to put the stuff inside the truck and come back to Grace too us probably 4 or 5 hours.

If only one person do this job he or she would have spent a day doing it plus being tired. But we did it in a short amount of time. Why? Because we all had the same goal; to bring these church items to our church in order to worship our Lord in a better setting. You and I are the body of Christ, and Christ is the Head. It is how the body of Christ works, then everything is in harmony.

My dear friend in Christ; we have all been given faith and now we live in this life as brothers and sisters in Christ. We might fail to one another, but we forgive each other and continue our journey in this world. Now, rather to expect something for our time, we serve others with our time. We view each other as fellow redeemed and in turn, view the outside world as lost sheep needing the rich and satisfying pasture of God's Church. All Christians are living sacrifices through Christ, our Great High Priest. In Jesus' name. Amen.

"The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keeps your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen