

Take-Home 12: Living Sacrifice

Romans 12 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

The letter turned on one word: "I appeal to you therefore... by the mercies of God" (12:1). Eleven chapters of mercy become five chapters of life: nothing ahead earns anything behind. The command is worship extended into the whole of embodied life: "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (12:1), the sacrifice Israel's prophets always said God wanted: "to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam 15:22); the obedient self-offering, never ritual detached from obedience; and ours is united to the one sacrifice of Christ, priest and victim. And the offerers have a name: "a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet 2:5), the priesthood of all the baptized.

The mold or the metamorphosis: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (12:2), until discernment becomes habitual through grace and practice. The offering is corporate: one body, many members, differing gifts meant for use (12:4-8), mercy done "with cheerfulness." And love made genuine fights the only way that wins: "Bless those who persecute you" (12:14); "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (12:21).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

"This is the sacrifice of Christians: we, being many, are one body in Christ. And this also is the sacrifice which the Church continually celebrates in the sacrament of the altar... in which she teaches that she herself is offered in the offering she makes to God" (City of God, Book X, chapter 6). At every Mass, the Church does Romans 12:1 corporately.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. TERESA OF CALCUTTA

St. Teresa of Calcutta spoke, in her letters and addresses, of serving Christ in his "distressing disguise," the poorest of the poor; this study's application: the Lord received on the altar in the morning is touched in broken bodies by afternoon. Her life was 12:1 unromanticized: a body presented daily in small mercies, with cheerfulness.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

St. Ignatius, in the Spiritual Exercises, teaches in substance that discerning God's will requires the renovation of 12:2: a mind freed from disordered attachments, able to recognize God's will when it appears. His Suscipe, handing over liberty, memory, understanding, and will, is the living sacrifice in the first person.

Live It This Week

- Each morning, pray a one-sentence 12:1: Lord, here is my body and this day; a living sacrifice. Renew it when you catch yourself crawling off the altar.
- At Mass this Sunday, at the offertory, deliberately place your week, its work, suffering, and people, on the altar with the bread and wine.
- Use the gift the group named in you once this week for someone in the body; and do one act of mercy with cheerfulness, the cheerfulness on purpose.

Memory Verse

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:2 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 13 once, slowly. Catechism references for this session: CCC 2031, 1368, 1268.