

## This Great Mystery

# Session 7. Put Off the Old Man

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*The new self is a garment God already made; the Spirit who sealed you is a Person your words can grieve.*

## What We Found

Paul traced the old way of life to its root, and the root was not behavior but a hardened heart that darkens the mind. Then he gave us three verbs the Ephesians were taught at their baptism: put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of your minds, put on the new man, 'created after the likeness of God.' The new self is not a self-improvement project. It is the 'one new man' Christ created, handed to us like a garment.

The garment image turned out to be older than Paul. When we chased it into the prophets, we found the same scene twice: filthy clothes removed, new clothes given, and in both cases God is the one doing the clothing. Our part is to stand there, receive, and then wear it. The early Church staged this literally: candidates for baptism stripped off their old clothes before the water and were dressed in white after it.

We discovered that 'Be angry but do not sin' is not Paul's invention; it is a word-for-word quotation of a psalm, and the psalm adds the method: take the anger to bed with God, in silence, before you take it anywhere else. Paul gives anger a sundown curfew because anger that stays overnight becomes a residence, and it is exactly there, in an ordinary nursed grudge, that the devil makes his first named appearance in the whole letter.

The hinge of the night was one clause: do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. You can only grieve a person, and only a person who loves. The Spirit who sealed us at baptism dwells with us still, and Paul's chosen example of what wounds him is the way we talk. The passage ends with two wardrobes: bitterness, wrath, clamor, slander, and malice onto the floor; kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness onto our backs, 'as God in Christ forgave you.' That little word 'as' is both our reason and our measure.

## Voices of the Church

### St. Cyril of Jerusalem, d. 386

*Teaching the newly baptized of Jerusalem, Cyril explains the moment in the rite when candidates stripped off their clothing before entering the water: the stripping itself, he teaches in substance, was an image of putting off the old man with his practices, so that the one who rose from the font came up clothed anew in Christ. What Paul writes in tonight's passage, the early Church acted out with actual clothes.*

Mystagogical Catecheses, Catechesis 2 (on Baptism). Summary of St. Cyril of Jerusalem's teaching, not a direct quotation.

**For the group.** For anyone in the room baptized as an infant: your baptism said all of this about you too, even though you cannot remember the water.

### St. John Chrysostom, d. 407

*Preaching through this letter, Chrysostom presses the sundown clause hard. His teaching, in substance: anger allowed to sleep in the house wakes up as something worse. A quarrel reconciled the same day is a small wound; the same quarrel nursed across days hardens into settled enmity, and the devil asks for nothing more than the ground of one unresolved evening. So make peace before the sun sets, while the wound is still small enough to close.*

Homilies on Ephesians. Summary of St. John Chrysostom's teaching, not a direct quotation.

**For the group.** The most actionable line of the night: which sun is going down, again tonight, on which anger?

### St. Francis de Sales, d. 1622

*On anger, his counsel in substance: it is far easier to refuse anger lodging than to evict it once it has moved in, and when we do fall, we should correct ourselves calmly and not rage at our own rage, which only doubles the fire. On the tongue, he teaches that slander is a kind of murder committed at a distance, wounding three at once: the speaker's own soul, the soul of the willing listener, and the good name of the absent, which is a life a person lives alongside their life.*

Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III. Summary of St. Francis de Sales' teaching, not a direct quotation.

**For the group.** Gentleness runs in two directions this week: toward the people you talk about, and toward yourself when you fail.

## Live It This Week

### Practices

1. The sundown rule: every evening this week, before you sleep, name to God any anger still in you from the day. Follow the psalm we found: bring it to your bed with him, in silence, and leave it there. If a specific reconciliation is needed and safe, take one concrete step toward it before Sunday.
2. One grace-carrying sentence per day: each day, say one deliberate sentence that builds someone up according to their need, in person or by message. Notice what it does to the room.
3. Get to confession this week or next: bring verse 31's list with you (bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice) and let the sacrament do what willpower has not.
4. The garment prayer: once each morning while you dress, pray one line: 'Lord, I put on the new man you made; renew my mind today.'

## Scripture Memory

### Ephesians 4:30

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

**Ephesians 4:30**

## Go Further in the Catechism

- CCC 1265. baptism makes the baptized a new creature, an adopted child of God
- CCC 1695. the whole moral life flows from what baptism made us
- CCC 698. the seal, a biblical symbol of the Holy Spirit given to believers
- CCC 2302. anger: the desire for revenge is illicit; just indignation is not
- CCC 2477. rash judgment, detraction, and calumny wound a neighbor's good name
- CCC 2842. forgiving as God forgave us is possible only in the Holy Spirit

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**Before next session.** Read Ephesians 5:1-20 before we meet again.