

## **Handout for Week Two #1**

### **Part one: "Embracing the Cross of Jesus Christ"**

Presentation

1 Corinthians 1:22-24

1 Corinthians 2:2-5

Paul was no stranger to suffering. Indeed, he seems to draw attention to suffering as a natural part of what it means to follow Christ and what it means to be an apostle. In particular, Paul is aware that proclaiming the truth can lead to much suffering and rejection.

2 Corinthians 11:23-33

This is the Christian paradox according to Paul: What in worldly terms is perceived as weakness is actually strength. No symbol so embodies this truth as the cross. Life in Christ means embracing the cross. It requires not that we flee from suffering but that we accept it and learn to live with it constructively.

Paul maintains that the cross will lead each Christian to eventual glory, because everyone who dies with Christ will share in his resurrection.

For Reflection and Journaling (Handout) For now and at home.

1. Make your own list of "sufferings" that are a part of your life. How would you compare them to what Paul endured? Do you see them as a weakness? In what ways have they made you strong?
2. Read Psalm 22 slowly in front of a crucifix or a picture of the crucifixion. The first lines of this lament ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?") appear on Jesus' lips while he hangs on the cross. Although they seem to be words of despair, they merely begin a lament psalm that ultimately expresses confidence in God's answer to prayer. How do you find these lines a comfort in the midst of trying times?
3. Do you ever feel that life is unfair and that you have received more than your share of suffering? How might Paul's approach to the cross of Jesus help you at such times?
4. When Paul prayed to have a mysterious difficulty (the "thorn in the side") removed from him, he says God responded, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Repeat this phrase over and over again, like a mantra, and meditate on its meaning.

Sharing with one other person

## **Handout for Week #2**

### **Part two: "Living in the Holy Spirit"**

Romans 8:9-11, 14

Romans 8:27

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

For St. Paul, the Holy Spirit is like the engine that makes things go.

Paul's main teachings about the Holy Spirit can be summarized by four observations:

**The first observation is that Paul understands the Holy Spirit to come from God.**

**Second observation is the effect of the Spirit upon believers.**

**Third observation is about the "gifts" that are apparent in the community of faith.**

**Fourth observation concerns the verification of the work of the spirit among us.**

## For Reflection and Journaling For now and at home

1. Read Galatians 5:18-25, where Paul contrasts "the works of the flesh" with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Both lists are quite concrete. Can you identify any qualities on the lists that are operative in your life? What "fruit" have you borne in your life? Make a prayer to the Holy Spirit in your own words asking to have your life bear fruit that reflects the life of the Spirit planted within you.
  
2. Paul writes in Romans 8:15-16, "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God." Pray the Our Father, the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, slowly and meditatively, consciously calling on the aid of the Holy Spirit to strengthen your relationship to God as a loving Father. Remember that the Spirit will accompany you in your prayer.
  
3. Use the words of the song "Spirit Move" and make it your personal prayer for 5-10 minutes:  
Spirit move, when you will, where you will, how you will. Spirit of God's love, now move within me.
  1. Pentecost came with its wind and its fire;  
No one was seen, but the Spirit had come.
  
  2. Before you, beside you, behind and inside you,  
His call comes from ev'rywhere, just stop and you'll hear.
  
  3. Try to define Him, enclose or enshrine Him;  
To catch is to lose Him, and to lose is to win.

## Sharing