

Renewed in the Spirit of Your Minds (18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Ephesians 4:17, 20-24—The Old vs. New Nature

¹⁷ Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that *you must no longer live as the Gentiles do*, in the futility of their minds; [¹⁸ they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; ¹⁹ they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness.] ²⁰ *You did not so learn Christ!*—²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. ²² *Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts,* ²³ *and be renewed in the spirit of your minds,* ²⁴ *and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.* (Ephesians 4:17, 20-24)

1. Gentiles: “gentiles” (Greek *ethnē*) (4:17) = non Jews, i.e., “pagans”

They [the Jewish people] are mindful of holy wedlock, and they do not engage in impious intercourse... as do Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Romans, spacious Greece and many nations of others, Persians and Galatians and all Asia, transgressing the holy law of immortal God... (*Sibylline Oracles* 3.595-600; trans. J. H. Charlesworth, *OTP* 1:375).

2.. Old Nature: literally, “old man” (Greek *palaios anthrōpos*) (4:22)

- a. Intellect: “futility of their minds” (4:17)
- b. Darkness: “darkened in their understanding” (4:18)
- c. Ignorance: “ignorance that is in them” (4:18)
- d. Sexual Sin: “licentiousness” and “deceitful lusts” (4:19)

3. New Nature: literally, “new man” (Greek *kainos anthrōpos*) (4:24)

- a. Intellect: “renewed in the spirit of your minds” (4:23)
- b. Morality: “true righteousness” and “holiness” (4:24)

Living Tradition

John Chrysostom: When one is already clothed, how is it said that one must further “put on” a new nature? [Eph 4:24]. *New clothing was once put on in baptism. The new clothing now being put on is the new way of life and conduct that flows from baptism.* There one is no longer clothed by deceitful desires but by God’s own righteousness.” (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Ephesians* 13.4.24; trans. Mark J. Edwards)

Jerome of Stridon: We are not being renewed in our thinking process apart from the renewal of our spirits. Nor are we renewed in our spirits without thinking. We are being

jointly renewed “in the spirit of our mind.”...The renewal of “the spirit of our mind” means that when the thought is clear and pure... then the spirit is rightly joined to it. They are so coupled as if by a cohesive glue that we no longer speak simply of the spirit but of “the spirit of our mind.” (Jerome, *Commentary on on Ephesians* 2.4.23-24; trans. Mark J. Edwards).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. According to Paul, when exactly does a person “put on the new nature” in Christ?

For Further Reading

1. Peter S. Williamson. *Ephesians*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009.
2. Mark J. Edwards. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VIII. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999.
3. Thomas Aquinas, O.P. *Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*. Translated by F. R. Larcher, O.P., and M. L. Lamb. Lander, Wyo.: Aquinas Institute, 2012.