

**Reconciliation through the Cross  
(16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)****Ephesians 2:13-18—The Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile**

<sup>13</sup> But now *in Christ Jesus you who once were far off* have been *brought near in the blood of Christ*. <sup>14</sup> For he is our peace, *who has made us both one*, and *has broken down the dividing wall of hostility*, <sup>15</sup> by *abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances*, that he might create in himself *one new man in place of the two*, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and *might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross*, thereby *bringing the hostility to an end*. <sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; <sup>18</sup> *for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father*. (Ephesians 2:13-18)

1. In Christ: center of Pauline theology; being “in Christ” (2:13)
2. Gentiles: “you who were once far off” (2:13)
3. Unity: “has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one” (2:14)
4. Wall of Hostility: possible allusion to the stone plaque discovered in 1871:

Temple Inscription: No man of another race is to enter within the fence and enclosure around the Temple. Whoever is caught will have only himself to thank for the death which follows [trans A. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 141].

Josephus: Such, then was the first court [a.k.a. “Court of the Gentiles”]. Within it and not far distant was a second one, accessible by a few steps and surrounded by a stone balustrade with an inscription prohibiting the entrance of a foreigner (Greek *alloethnē*) under the threat of the penalty of death (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.417, trans. LCL)

5. The Law: “abolished” or “nullified” (Greek *katargeō*) in “his flesh” (2:15)
6. New Creation: “create in himself one new man” (Greek *kainon anthrōpon*) (2:15)
7. Reconciliation: between human peoples comes *through the cross* (2:16)
8. Trinity: “in Christ Jesus” (2:13); “access in one Spirit” (2:18); “to the Father” (2:18)

**The Living Tradition**

Thomas Aquinas: A problem arises here since he says “breaking down the middle barrier or partition” [Eph 2:14] because, on the contrary, it is written: “do not think I have come to destroy (Greek *kataluō*) the law or the prophets. I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matt 5:17). I reply. The old law contained both moral and ceremonial precepts. The moral commandments were not destroyed by Christ but fulfilled in the counsels he added... “But I say to you, “love your enemies...” (Matt 5:43-44). He abolished the ceremonial precepts with regard to what they were in themselves, but he fulfilled them with regard to what they prefigured, adding what was symbolized to the symbol... To

break down this barrier of partition is to destroy the hostility between the Jews and the gentiles.” (Aquinas, *Commentary on Ephesians* no. 114, trans. F. Larcher and M. L. Lamb).

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection (16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. Does the apostle Paul contradict Jesus’ statement that he did not come to “abolish” the Law (Matt 5:17)? If not, how? What does St. Thomas Aquinas say?

---

---

---

### 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.
4. Andrew T. Lincoln. *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, Tex.: Word, 1990.