

Always Be Prepared to Give an *Apologia* (6th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

1 Peter 3:15-18—Always Be Prepared

¹⁵ But in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. *Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence;* ¹⁶ and *keep your conscience clear*, so that, when you are abused, those who revile *your good behavior in Christ* may be put to shame. ¹⁷ *For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong.* ¹⁸ *For Christ also died for sins once for all*, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. (1 Peter 3:15-18)

1. Apologetics: be prepared to give a “defense” (Greek *apologia*) (3:15)
 - a. “Gentleness” or “humility” (Greek *prautēs*)
 - b. “Reverence” or “fear” (Greek *phobos*)
2. Witness: when abused, keep your “conscience” (Greek *syneidēsis*) clear (3:16)
3. Being “In Christ”:
 - a. Only Paul and Peter use the expression “in Christ” (Greek *en Christō*)
 - b. Moral Participation: Good behavior “in Christ” (1 Pet 3:16)
 - c. Eschatological Participation: called to eternal glory “in Christ” (1 Pet 5:10)
 - d. Ecclesial Participation: greeting to all “in Christ” (1 Pet 5:14)
4. Innocent Suffering: can be “the will of God” (*to thelēma tou theou*) (3:17)
5. Example of Christ: “Christ also died for sins once for all” (3:18)

The Living Tradition

Augustine: The apostle tells us to be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks us for *an explanation of our faith*, because if an unbeliever asks me a reason for my faith and hope and I perceive that he cannot accept it unless he believes, I give him that very reason, so that he may see how absurd it is for him to ask a reason for things which he cannot grasp until he believes. (Augustine, *Letters* 120; trans. Wilfrid Parsons)

Bede the Venerable: In two ways ought we to give a reason for our hope and faith to those who demand it: *both by communicating the due motives for our hope and faith to all who ask*, whether believers or unbelievers; and *by always keeping the profession of our faith and hope unimpaired even amidst the pressures of our adversaries*, showing by our patience how reasonably we have learned that they are to be kept, for whose love we fear neither to suffer adversities nor undergo death. (Bede, *Commentary on 1 Peter* 3:15; trans. D. Hurst).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (6th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

1. What is the meaning of the word “defense” (Greek *apologia*)? How is it different from the English word “apology”?

2. What does Peter mean by being “in Christ”?

For Further Reading

1. Keating, Daniel. *First and Second Peter, Jude*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
2. Bede the Venerable. *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*. Translated by Dom David Hurst, OSB. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1985.
3. Bray, Gerald. *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament XI. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000.