

Paul and Living Sacrifice (22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Romans 12:1-2—Living Sacrifice, Spiritual Worship, and Transformation

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, *to present your bodies as a living sacrifice*, holy and acceptable to God, which is *your spiritual worship*. ² *Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)

1. Present: “present” or “offer” (as in offer a sacrifice) (Greek *paristimi*) (12:1)
2. Bodies: “body” (Greek *sōma*) (12:1; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:10)
3. Living Sacrifice: “living sacrifice” (Greek *thysian zōsan*) (12:1)

For *the life of the flesh is in the blood*; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for *it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life*. (Leviticus 17:11)

4. Spiritual Worship: “rational worship” (Greek *logikē latreian*) = life in Christ (12:1)

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your *mortal bodies*, to make you obey their passions. ¹³ Do not *present* (Greek *paristimi*) your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but *present yourselves to God* as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness... ¹⁹ For just as you once *presented* your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, *so now present your members to righteousness for sanctification*. (Romans 6:12-13, 19)

5. This World = the Old Creation (cf. Roman 5:12-21)
6. Transformation: “transformation” (Greek *metamorphoō*) and the “mind” (12:2)

¹⁵ Yes, to this day *whenever Moses is read* a veil lies over their minds; ¹⁶ but *when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed*. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed* (Greek *metamorphoō*) *into his likeness from one degree of glory to another*; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

The Living Tradition

Chrysostom: How is the body to become a sacrifice? Let the eye look on no evil thing, and it has already become a sacrifice. Let the tongue say nothing filthy, and it has become an offering. Let your hand do nothing evil, and it has become a whole burnt offering. But even this is not enough, for we must have good works also. The hand must do alms, the

mouth must bless those who curse it, and the ears must find time to listen to the reading of Scripture. Sacrifice allows of no unclean thing. It is the first fruits of all other actions. (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 20; in *NPNF1* 11.496).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. What does Paul mean when he says to offer your “body” as a “living sacrifice”?

2. What role does Scripture play in the “transformation” and “renewal” of the mind?

For Further Reading

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans* (trans. F. R. Larcher, O.P.; eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón; Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute, 2012).
2. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 11 (ed. Philip Schaff; repr.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994).