Romans Class

Notes

by Fr. Harry Linsinbigler

Romans

ch and vs.

15.2 Though it might be lawful for us to do, and even if it is edifying to oneself, we still have the obligation to ask if it is edifying to our neighbor. If it is not, then it is not truly edifying to us at that moment in any case.

15.5 St. Paul once again highlights the importance of seeking and achieving like-mindedness in Christ.

15.6 We should recognize this as being very similar to one of the priestly acclamations in the Liturgy.

15.14 Goodness goes hand-in-hand with proper admonishment. Hence being of "one mind" does not mean that we become wishy-washy to please the few that stand against the general uniformity, and have separated themselves for matters contrary to the boundries that the Fathers have set. Unfortunately, as important as some matters seem to certain individuals and schismatic groups, the Fathers have already told us which take precidence and define unity and those which take a lesser place and where flexibility of practice or thought is permitted.

15.16 We have a clear reference here to the Eucharist and the Priesthood beginning with the Apostolic Ministry. St. John Chrysostom says in Hom. 29 of Romans that in this passage St. Paul is "not speaking of mere service, as in the beginning, but of service and priestly ministering (leitourgian kai hierourgian). For to me this is a priesthood, this preaching and declaring. This is the sacrifice I bring..." Cf. the Orthodox Study Bible note for this.

15.20 This is a very difficult passage at first glance. Should the Church proselytize to those who are not Orthodox and yet are Christians? St. John Chrysostom thinks that St. Paul is merely trying to be humble here, and showing that as an Apostle he does not wish to reap a reward or seek credit for building upon the Apostolic foundations that are already laid, for whoever first laid it should receive the reward and the credit. He is referring specifically to Rome (see below).

15.20-22 Paul is explaining to the Romans that it is not due to lack of esteem for them, but because the Apostles had already established the Church of Rome, and he had to finish establishing the Churches appointed him before he came for a visit, since they had already received this blessing. But he assures them in vs. 23-24 that he wishes to see them.

15.25-27 It is the duty of the Gentile churches which were impoverished spiritually and "fed and clothed" spiritually by the Jewish Christian churches, to reciprocate to them by ministering unto them what they are lacking: in bodily matters. Both are the duty of every Christian, to different degrees according to each's calling within the one Body of Christ.

15.29 What does "in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." St. John Chrysostom says in Hom. 30 on Romans that "either he speaks of alms [Gr. money given charitably] or generally of good deeds. For blessing is a name he very commonly gives to alms." Being charitable and giving (i.e. to want someone to have what is yours) is the opposite of covetousness (i.e. to want yourself to have what is someone elses), and thus is a fulfillment of many commandments. It is the fulfillment of the law and the accomplishment of the Gospel, and bears witness to the attainment of the Spirit that is Holy.

15.30-32 Trinitarian passage. He is referring here to liturgical prayer. St. Paul asks for 3 things. First is that he is saved from the hands of adversaries against the faith, second that he adequately ministers to the Church in Jerusalem, and third that he is able to reach them, by the will of God, in joy, that they all may be "refreshed" together.

16.1ff. As was said in an earlier class from Acts, the 70 Apostles are also to be remembered by the faithful. As the OSB notes, many of the 70 are numbered here.

16.9 Stachys, one of the 70, was the first bishop of Byzantium.

16.16 "Greet one another with a holy kiss." All Orthodox traditions have a form of this. The clergy and sometimes the laity do it approaching the anaphora as a sign and heartfelt gesture in fulfillment of the Savior's command, "love one another" and "Leave your gift before the altar...First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matt. 5.24)

16.17 Anti-schismatic guidance.

16.18 This refers most likely to those who stick to Jewish diet and "serve the belly" rather than God. Nevertheless, in this culture we have two extremes. The one extreme is un-religious fasting, to which obesity is abhorrant but God has no place in their practice. The other is over-indulgence, with no fasting or limitation of food. Both lead to destruction, and this is why we should feel blessed that we have a cycle of feasts and fasts, to keep us from either extreme, knowing that the feast and food are blessing from God, and yet also proving that man does not live by bread alone.

16.19-20 Don't participate in evil talk or immoral practice, and avoid exposure to it as much as possible. If we follow this God will "crush Satan under our feet."

16.23 Apparently two offices for these men in the local Church of Rome: host and treasurer. Quartus has no other notable position so he is called simply "a brother" (i.e. a brother in Christ).

16.25-26 We have the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began, and this is according with the command and will of God in "obedience to the faith," the Faith passed down from the beginning, the Orthodox Faith.