

A six-week
Bible study...

Waking Up a Culture of Indifference!

Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary

**for
youth....**

based on St.
Paul's letter to
the Romans





“God is not indifferent! God cares about mankind! God does not abandon us!”

Pope Francis begin his address for the **World day of peace** with these words. I think we are all in agreement that we would greatly desire peace in our world. If you were to look up news on your cell phone right now, disorder, violence, hatred, persecution, hunger, are likely words you will find within the headlines.

How do we solve these crises? The vicar of Christ, our Pope suggests that it begin by combating the culture of indifference that surrounds us...indifference to our own sin, indifference to the needs of others, and indifference to God.

To guide us through this study, we will be studying the life and the words of **St. Paul in his letter to the Romans**. You may be surprised to see that many of issues plaguing that ancient society sound much ours today. This great apostle taught his flock to go against the immorality considered societal norm.

St. John Paul II has given the world a similar message. He has called all of humanity to fight against what he called, the culture of death, and to build a culture a love, a culture of life!

Let us always remember that for this to be authentic, we must turn to Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” (John 14:6)

Bible Study Objectives

To identify concrete steps I will take to move from indifference to solidarity and mercy.

To evaluate how the culture of life is more fitting according to the dignity of the human person.

To evaluate in our own hearts those attitudes, manner of thinking or habits that resemble more the way of the world than God's Kingdom.



To compare and contrast St. Paul's world with our modern crisis of indifference.



What is indifference?

Before we move forward, it would be good to have straight our concepts. Many in society today have lost a clear understanding of the definition of concepts and words. Against popular belief, there are **objective definitions** to realities, and so, we begin our study with the clear definition of indifference.

Webster dictionary
Indifference: A lack of interest, concern,
or sympathy.

Pope Francis calls
indifference
“The fatal with drawl to
oneself” (includes with
others and with God)



Week 1

Teaching by example

A background of St. Paul's life



Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord."

~ Romans 12:11

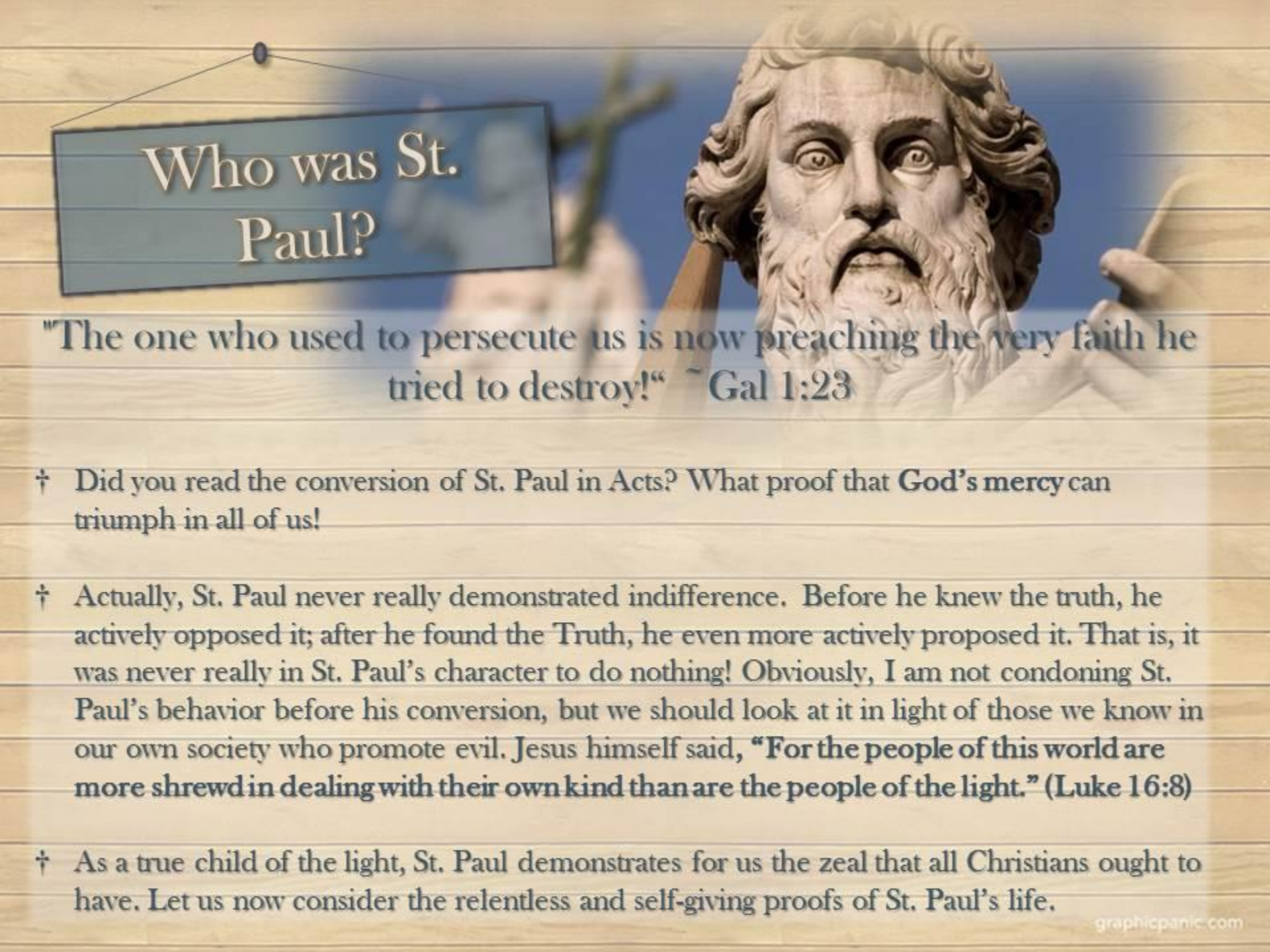
Passages to Read



Acts 9:1-30.



2 Corinthians 11:25-27



Who was St. Paul?

"The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!" ~ Gal 1:23

- † Did you read the conversion of St. Paul in Acts? What proof that **God's** mercy can triumph in all of us!
- † Actually, St. Paul never really demonstrated indifference. Before he knew the truth, he actively opposed it; after he found the Truth, he even more actively proposed it. That is, it was never really in St. Paul's character to do nothing! Obviously, I am not condoning St. Paul's behavior before his conversion, but we should look at it in light of those we know in our own society who promote evil. Jesus himself said, **"For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light."** (Luke 16:8)
- † As a true child of the light, St. Paul demonstrates for us the zeal that all Christians ought to have. Let us now consider the relentless and self-giving proofs of St. Paul's life.

True concern for the wellbeing of others



The word “Apostle” means messenger. We know of the 12 which Jesus chose to be close to him and to spread the Good News in a particular manner, but St. Paul, although he never counted among the 12 is often referred to as **THE APOSTLE**. From his 14 letters in the New Testament, we can see that he truly delivered the Good News of Jesus Christ to all. From his initial encounter with the Lord, there grew in Him a deep concern for the well being of souls. In his heart was the concern of the salvation of the world. St. Paul was obviously not indifferent to the others, nor did he ignore the command of Christ to *“make disciples of all nations,”* (Matthew 28:19) as we will soon see.....

A Slave for Christ

-Romans 1:1

- † He evangelizes countless cities and helps train others to do so such as Timothy and John Mark.

As you read from 2 Corinthians, St. Paul describes some of his perils:

- † Paul spends at least five total years of his ministry in prison.
 - † He is whipped five times.
 - † He is beaten three times with rods.
 - † He also survives a stoning.
- † AND he endures a shipwreck in the Mediterranean.

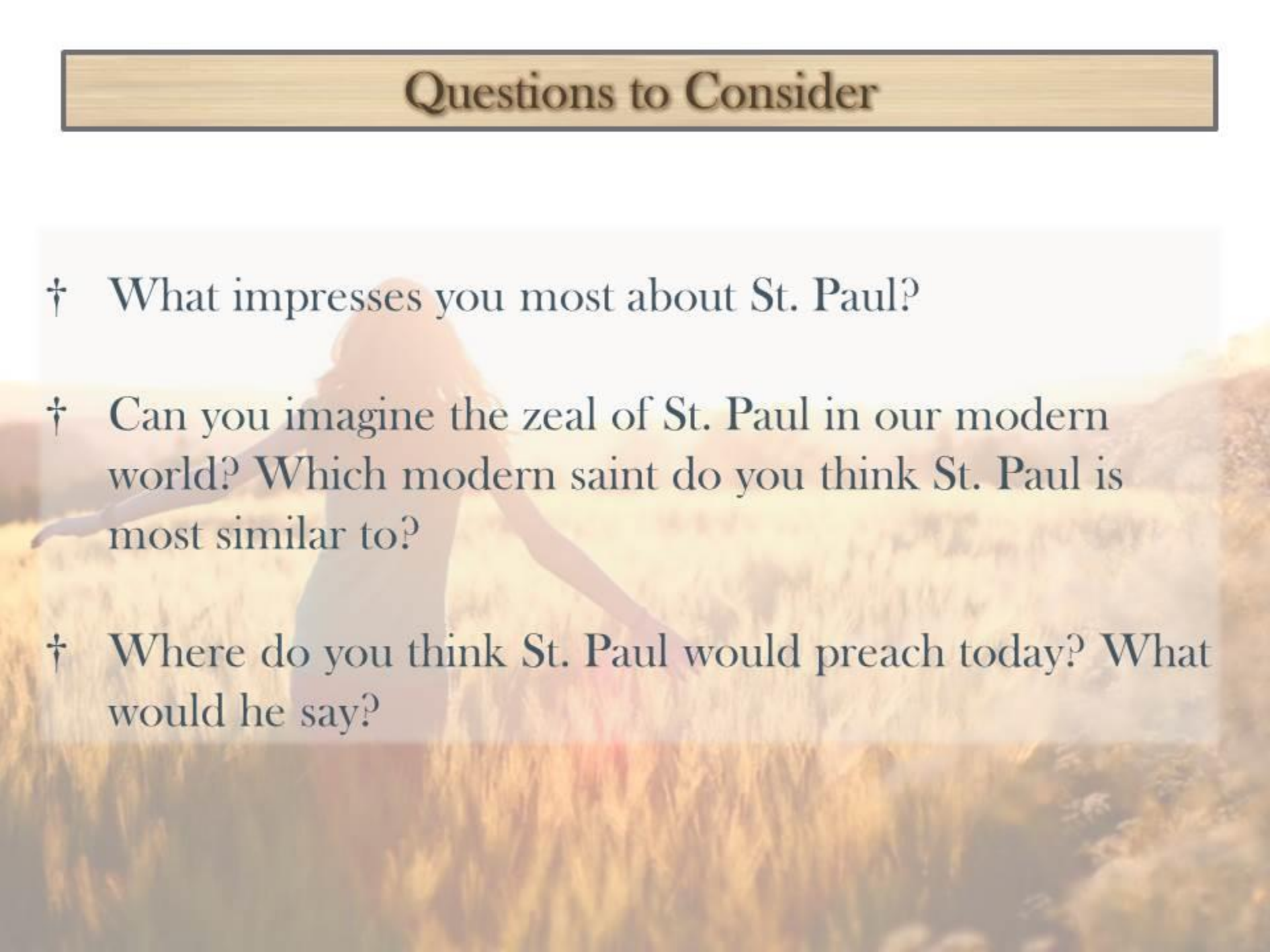
† Paul traveled over 10,000 miles proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- † He conducts at least FIVE missionary journeys that take him to Asia Minor, Syria, Greece, Italy, Spain, Britain, and elsewhere.



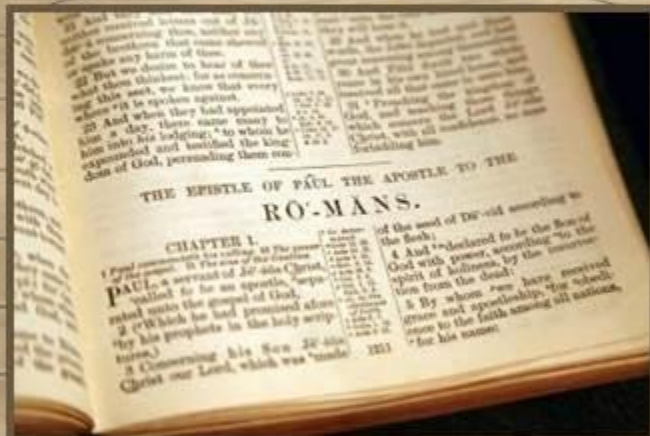
He spent Ultimately, he was beheaded in Rome, giving his life totally for the witness of Truth in about 67 AD.

Questions to Consider

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- A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark dress, stands in a field of tall golden grass. She is seen from behind, with her arms slightly outstretched, looking towards a bright sunset or sunrise over a distant horizon. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.
- † What impresses you most about St. Paul?
 - † Can you imagine the zeal of St. Paul in our modern world? Which modern saint do you think St. Paul is most similar to?
 - † Where do you think St. Paul would preach today? What would he say?

Week 2

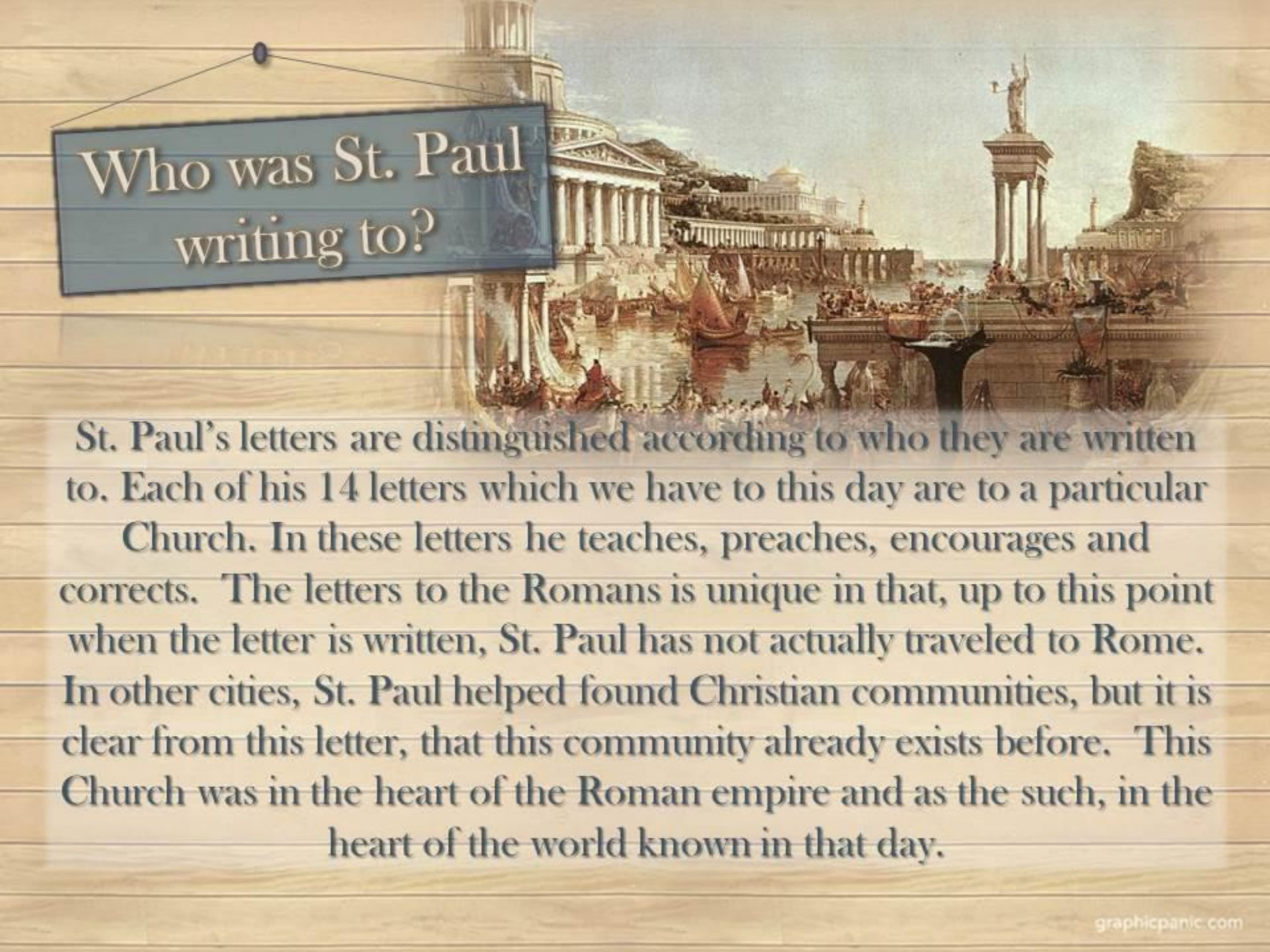
“To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints”
A background to the Letter to the Romans



Passages to Read
† Read Romans 1:1-15



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Who was St. Paul writing to?

St. Paul's letters are distinguished according to who they are written to. Each of his 14 letters which we have to this day are to a particular Church. In these letters he teaches, preaches, encourages and corrects. The letters to the Romans is unique in that, up to this point when the letter is written, St. Paul has not actually traveled to Rome. In other cities, St. Paul helped found Christian communities, but it is clear from this letter, that this community already exists before. This Church was in the heart of the Roman empire and as the such, in the heart of the world known in that day.

Christians in Rome

† The Christian community existing in Rome consisted of a diverse group of both converted Jews and gentiles. As such, clashes of cultural difference were bound to arise. Many parts of St. Paul's letter address these potential issues. Part of St. Paul's challenge was to build solidarity amongst this diversity. Let his call for solidarity also be true for our communities!

The Church in the first century truly believed Christ was returning very soon. St. Paul's letter has a hint of urgency, an urgency we would do well to soak in and allow it to set fire to our hearts.



Martyrs for the Faith



Like many of the first century communities, Roman Christians felt persecution.

The famous fire in Rome in 64 AD, which in truth was begun by the insane emperor Nero, was blamed on the Christians community. Many of the readers of this letter from St. Paul would become martyrs for the faith. Both St. Peter and St. Paul would die under Nero's persecution. Although the exact number of martyrs is unknown, the manner of death is well recorded by one ancient historian:

Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames. These served to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown open the gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or drove about in a chariot. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but glut one man's cruelty, that they were being punished."

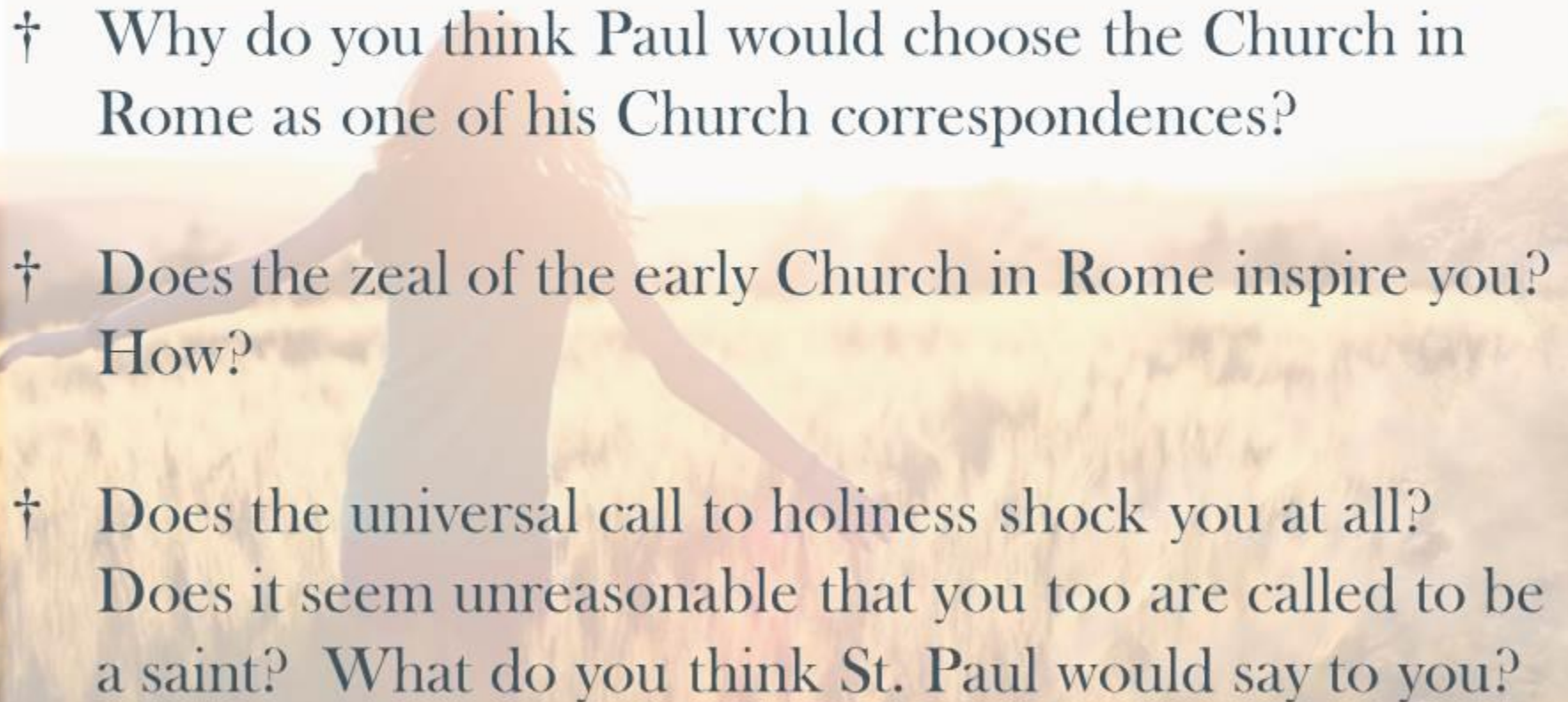
(Tacitus, Annales, 15, 44)

Called to be saints..



St. Paul begins his letter by addressing the diverse community in Rome as saints. He reminds them that to be a saint, that is, to be holy is the call of all Christians. Leon Bloy once wrote, *"The only real sadness, the only real failure, the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint."* Why, because this is our greatest calling; this is what we were made for. St. Catherine of Sienna once said, *"Be who God made you to be and you will se the world on fire!"* The sneaky danger to becoming who we were meant to be is indifference. God will not force us to cooperate with His graces. Yes, this standard for holiness is high, but all things are possible with God's grace. All He needs is our cooperation.

Questions to Consider

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- † Why do you think Paul would choose the Church in Rome as one of his Church correspondences?
 - † Does the zeal of the early Church in Rome inspire you? How?
 - † Does the universal call to holiness shock you at all? Does it seem unreasonable that you too are called to be a saint? What do you think St. Paul would say to you?

Week 3

Culture of Death: Ancient Rome and Modern Society



Do not conform yourselves to this age.
~ Romans 12:2

Passages to Read

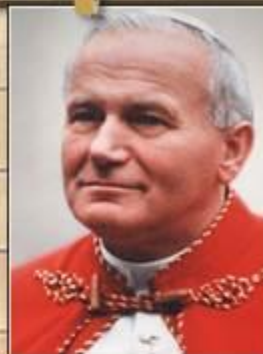
- † Romans 1:19-21
- † Romans 1:25-31
- † Romans 12:1-2
- Romans 13: 11-14

After reading this passages, particularly from the first chapter, it is clear that authentically lived Christians would have stood in stark contrast to those nonbelievers around them. St. Paul describes some of these immoral behaviors and the roots of these actions. Those who do not acknowledge God, hand themselves over to **wickedness, evil, greed, malice, envy, murder, rivalry, treachery, spite, gossip, disobedience, and sexual immorality**. Ancient Rome was known for its acceptance of homosexual behavior abortion, infacide (abandoning an unwanted infant), and bloody death sports for entertainment. While that society might have seen that as acceptable, St. Paul makes it clear that such rejection of the natural law in every person's heart is the result of manipulating truth in order to excuse one's behavior. St. Paul wants to make it clear to the Roman community (and us!) that a culture which rejects Christ who is Life, opens themselves up to darkness and death. These behaviors listed above belong to a culture that promotes death.

Wickedness and Rome

Note the Catholic Church only condemns homosexual behavior. We are only to despise the sin, not the sinner.

Be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. ~ Romans 12:2



The Church counters the culture of death with the culture of love.

— Pope John Paul II —

AZ QUOTES

VS ONOLEZ

Do some of these behaviors of Ancient Rome remind you of our culture today?

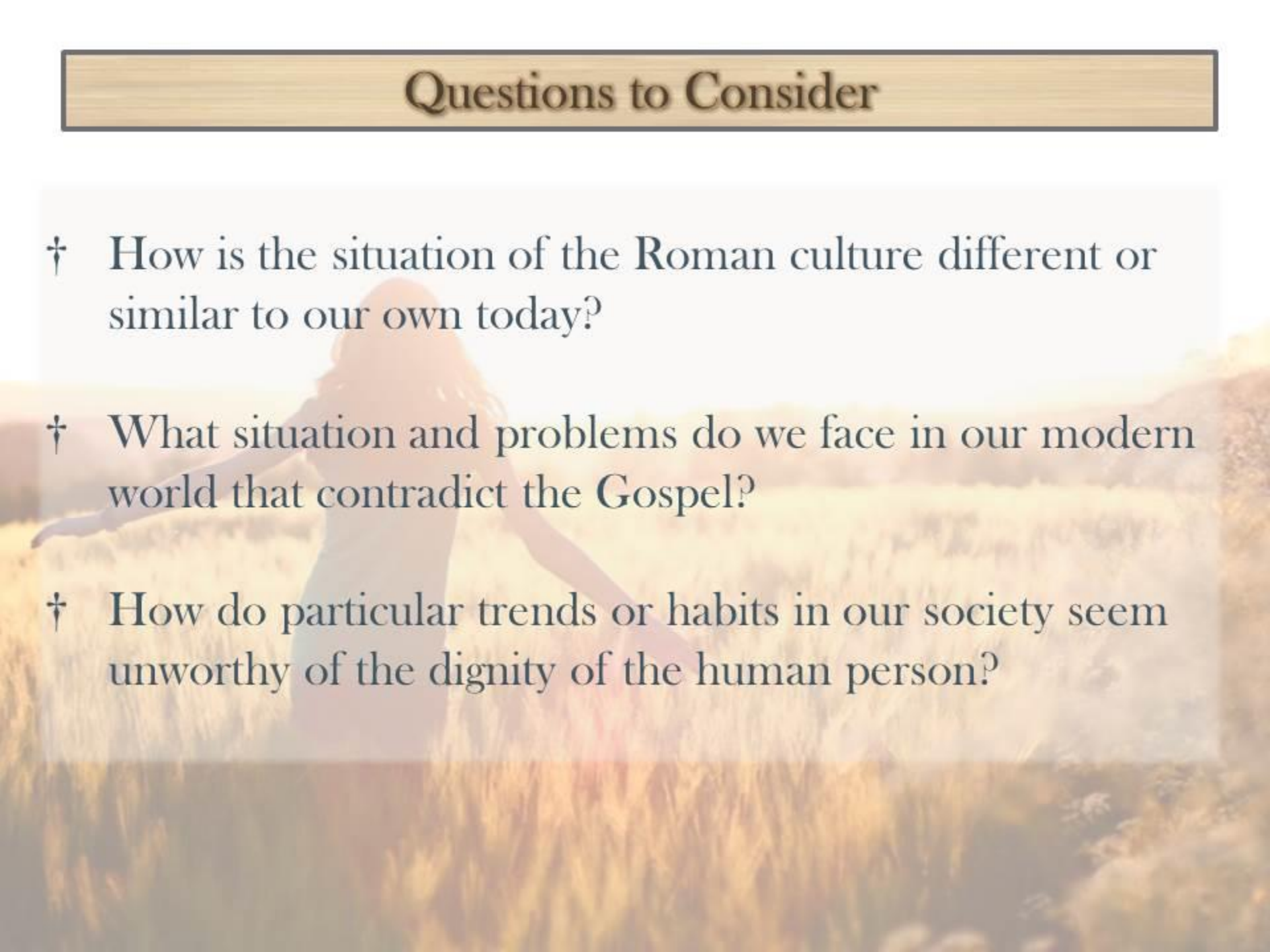
Mother Adela, foundress of *The Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary* explains that, “A culture of death is built, of self-referential selfishness, of indifference, of impurity and of disregard for the human person.”¹ Indifference

for the other is what contaminates the heart and leads one to “enclosing it in selfishness, indifference, harness and disordered appetites, competition, pride, vanity, rivalry, vengeance and hate...and when these dark attitudes are assumed as a normal way of life, it influences culture, making it a culture of selfishness, of indifference, rejection, violence and irresponsibility, of seduction, manipulation and lies.”² Yes, the culture of death, violence is a result of personal choices to be indifferent to God and to one another.

¹ Mother Adela Galindo, Foundress SCTJM, *I Will Show you a Still More Excellent way of love: Letter For Lent 2015*, http://piercedhearts.org/mother_adela/talks_adobe/Lent2015_i_will_show_you_a_more_perfect_way_eng.pdf.

² Ibid

Questions to Consider

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- A woman with long hair, seen from behind, stands in a field of tall, golden grass. She has her arms outstretched, reaching towards the horizon. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with rolling hills under a warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is contemplative and peaceful.
- † How is the situation of the Roman culture different or similar to our own today?
 - † What situation and problems do we face in our modern world that contradict the Gospel?
 - † How do particular trends or habits in our society seem unworthy of the dignity of the human person?

Week 4

Combating Indifference to our own Conversion



I came that they might have life and
have it more abundantly.
John 10:10

Passages to Read

† Romans 6: 1-11

† Romans 8:12-13

Sin is not to have any
power over you!
~ Romans 6:14



In the past weeks we have seen that the message St. Paul delivers to Rome can just as easily be received by us in our modern culture. In the first chapter of his letter, Paul explains that the wickedness and disordered behavior can be directly linked to a culture that rejects God, a culture that has “eclipsed God” as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI once said¹. Yes, the desire to change the world is a gift particularly set aflame in the hearts of youth. This change begins with changing our own hearts. This change requires our conversion of heart. We cannot awaken the culture of indifference around us, until we do so in ourselves first.

¹ Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI, "23rd World Youth Day, Benedict XVI (July 17, 2008))

Put to death the deeds
of the body.
Romans 8:13

SO LONG

to self

Conversion is not something that happens only one. Actually, it is something that should happen everyday. It is saying no to yourself so that you can open yourself up to God. **“Conversion of heart is to discover and contemplate a new path before our eyes, the most excellent path, the most perfect....love is demanding, or rather, requires that we walk the steep and narrow way of conversion of heart to break the selfish narrowness of self-reference, indifference and utilitaristic selfishness, to widen the tent and donate ourselves with joy, and always seeking the good of others.”¹**

Conversion requires going deep into your heart and recognizing, naming your sin...it requires recognizing those ways in which you are indifferent to the needs and sufferings of others.

Questions to Consider

- † What are my continuous faults?
- † What do I need to surrender to the mercy of God.
- † What is my life have I grown accustomed to which is not actually an attitude or thought of a Christian?
- † Who is our neighbor? Do I have an authentic concern for suffering humanity, or do I just various crisis's which I hear on the news as something related to entertainment or something to feed my curiosity?

Week 5

Building a Civilization of love



Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

Romans 13:12

Passages to Read

† Romans 12:3-20

† Romans 13:11-14

hate what is evil.
Romans 12:10

Be not afraid!
Joannes Paulus II



When we look at the evil in the world, it can be very tempting to say, “There is really not much I can do.” It is much easier to be indifferent, to pretend like it is not even there. Speaking to youth in Boston back in 1979, St. John Paul II said,

“Faced with today's problems and disappointments, many people will try to escape from their responsibility. Escape in selfishness, escape in sexual pleasure, escape in drugs, escape in violence, escape in indifference and cynical attitudes. I propose to you the option of love, which is the opposite of escape.”¹ What is evil? In the same manner that darkness is the absence of light, evil is the absence of good. The culture of indifference leads to the culture of death. The only way to fight this evil is with the opposite action. The option which St. John Paul II proposes, is a culture of life that builds a **new civilization of Love.**

¹ John Paul II, Homily, October 1, 1979, Vatican website, <https://w2.vatican.va>

Let love be Sincere; Romans 12:10

If the, “culture of death is built, of self-referential selfishness, of indifference, of impurity and of disregard for the human person,”¹ then the civilization of love must be built upon, selfless giving, love, purity and recognizing the that your neighbor is your brother. Yes, you are your brother's keeper. (read Genesis 4) Since when did the suffering of our brother not become our business!

If love is to be sincere, one must give be willing to live to all its demands. Love is demanding. St. John Paul II tells us “Love demands effort and a personal commitment to the will of God. It means discipline and sacrifice, but it also means joy and human fulfillment.”² Let us not be afraid of the demands of love! Let us always remember that we were created to be loved and to love in return. Anything less, is simply not human.



¹ John Paul II, Homily, October 1, 1979, Vatican website, <https://w2.vatican.va>

². IBID

Conquer evil with good; Romans 12:10



Thus, we find, the fulfillment of the human person is in love. In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul gives us sort of a recipe, you could say, to conquer evil with love. Let us take a moment to look at what he teaches the Church in Rome. (taken and paraphrased from Romans 12:8-21). As you read through these specific exhortations to love, let this be for your own heart an examination of conscience. Measure your love by seeing how much you give yourself in service to the needs of your neighbor. The list is long, are you ready to be honest with yourself?

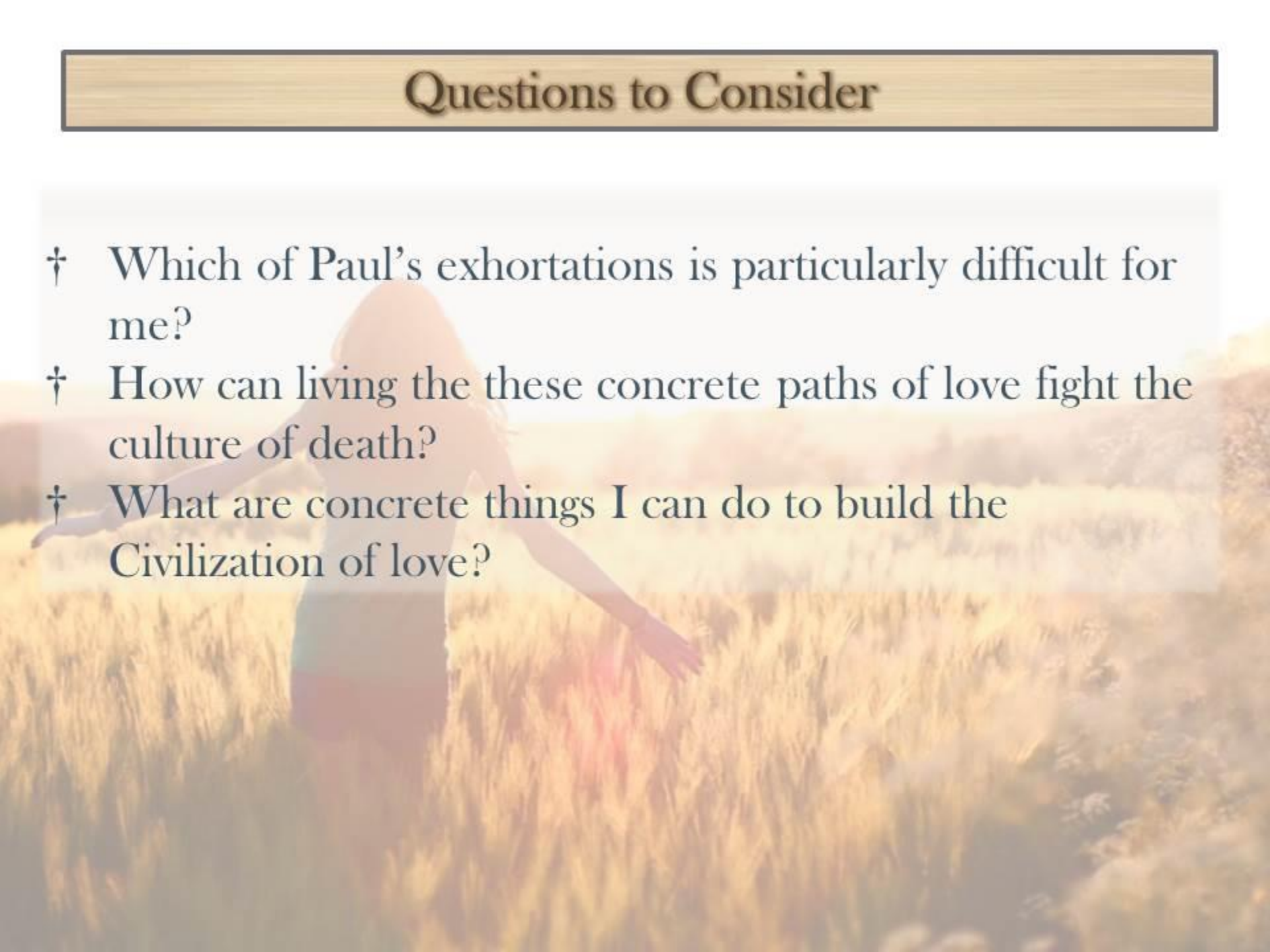
The duties of a Christians

- † Be cheerful while doing acts of mercy
- † Love all with mutual affection
- † Anticipate one another in showing honor
- † So not allow yourself to become lukewarm.
Remain fervent.
- † Rejoice in hope
- † Endure affliction
- † **PRAY!**
- † Be attentive to the needs of others in the community
- † Be hospitable
- † Bless those who do you harm
- † Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep
with those who weep
- † Treat people equally



- † Be humble and associate with the humble
- † Remember that you don't know everything!
- † Have your priorities straight!
- † On your part, live in peace with all
- † Don't seek revenge!
- † Don't just do acts of mercy to those who you like, but do it for your enemies.

Questions to Consider

- 
- A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a dark top and a long skirt, is walking through a field of tall, golden wheat. She is looking down at the wheat with her hands reaching out to touch it. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with more fields and trees under a warm, golden light.
- † Which of Paul's exhortations is particularly difficult for me?
 - † How can living the these concrete paths of love fight the culture of death?
 - † What are concrete things I can do to build the Civilization of love?

Week 6

Good News ought to be shared immediately!



Passages to Read

- † Romans 12:3-7
- † Romans 10:13-17

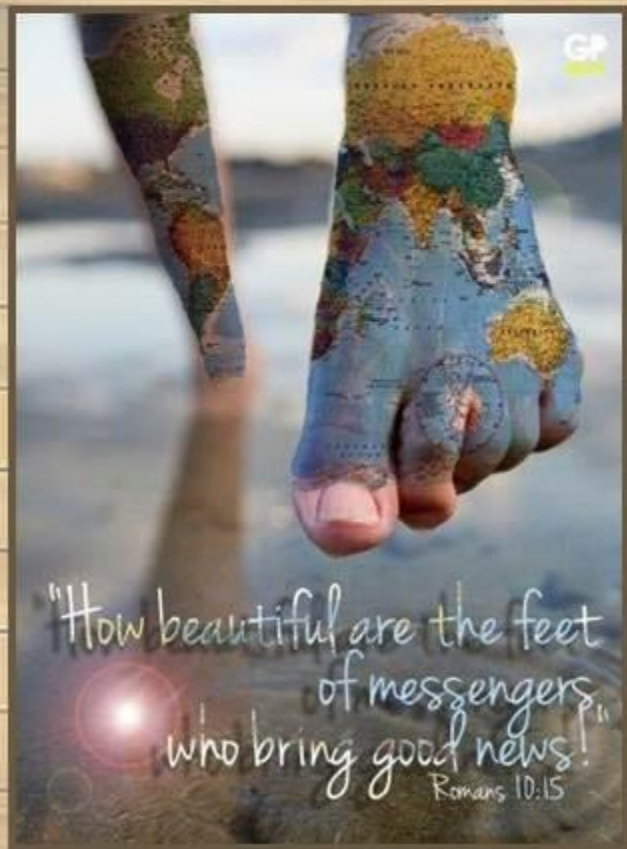
“How can they believe in
Him whom they have not
heard?”

Romans 10:14

In living authentically Christ's commandment to love, we become counter cultural and instead of conforming ourselves to the culture of death, we begin to build a culture of Love and Life, a New Civilization based on love. We cannot forget that we must stay united to Christ. Our efforts to change ourselves and society for the better cannot be done with Him, for He tells us, *“Apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)* A New Civilization cannot be built without sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. Let us also remember that we cannot be indifferent to all souls who have yet to hear the Good News!

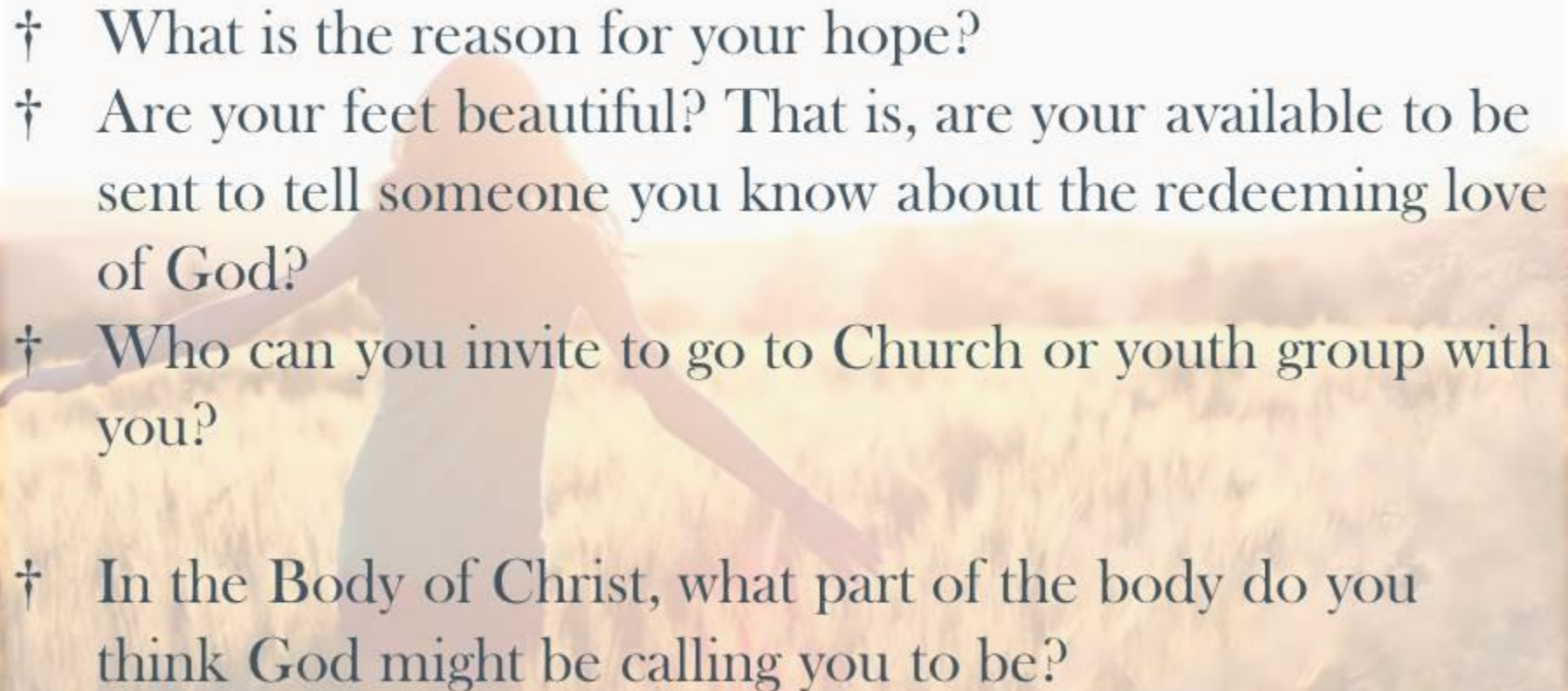
How beautiful are the feet
of those who bring Good
News!"

Romans 10:15



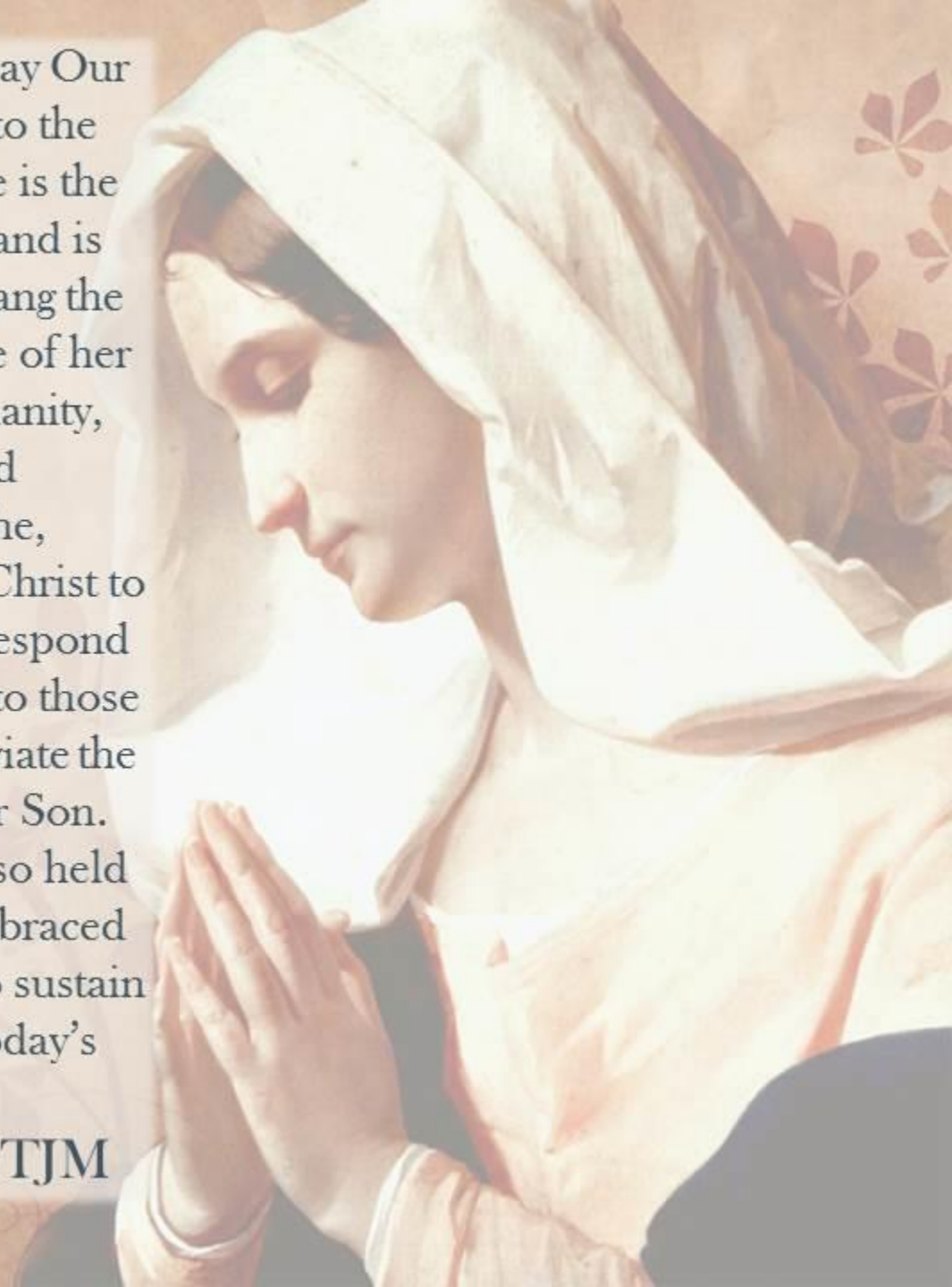
The Church exists to Evangelize! You are part of the Church, therefore, you are called to be an evangelizer! You may not be called to be a missionary to Africa, but you are called as a Christian to, *"Share the hope that is within you."* (1 Peter 3:15) If the thought of sharing your faith with others makes you uncomfortable, then simply allow your heart to be open more to God's love. When we are filled with faith, hope in Christ's promises, and His love, it cannot help but overflow to those around us. St. Paul tells us that we as Christians, as parts of His Body are sent to build His Kingdom. He reminds us, that Good News ought to be shared immediately.

Questions to Consider

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- † What is the reason for your hope?
 - † Are your feet beautiful? That is, are you available to be sent to tell someone you know about the redeeming love of God?
 - † Who can you invite to go to Church or youth group with you?
 - † In the Body of Christ, what part of the body do you think God might be calling you to be?

“May Jesus reveal His Heart to us; may Our Lady, who walked the path of love to the extreme with Jesus, teach us that love is the greatest dignity of the human heart and is always a free choice. May she who sang the hymn of Maternal Charity, who made of her life a gift of love for Christ and humanity, guide us on the path of love and unconditional solidarity... May she, messenger and apostle of the love of Christ to humanity, teach us to see, hear and respond with the promptitude proper to love, to those who suffer... may she teach us to alleviate the wounds of the Mystical Body of Her Son. She who embraced Christ crucified, so held Him with Her maternal gaze and embraced Him in her maternal arms, teach us to sustain the Church and humanity amidst today's sufferings.”

~ Mother Adela, Foundress SCTJM



Made Sr. Kristi Marie, SCTJM



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