

LIVING WITH CHRIST THIS WEEK

Sunday, February 28: Second Sunday in Lent (C) - violet
Monday, March 1: Ferial - purple
Tuesday 2: Ferial - purple
Wednesday 3: Ferial - purple
Thursday 4: Ferial - purple
Friday 5: Ferial - purple
Saturday 6 : Ferial - purple
Sunday 7: Third Sunday in Lent (C) - violet

The Bible and Violence

4. In St. Paul



To conclude this brief series on violence, we will concentrate on one of the most beautiful writings from St. Paul. These quotations are from his letter to the Christians in the town of Colossae.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly; fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). (Col 3:5)

Addressing these converts, Paul reminded them that another reality existed for them to judge the value of their actions. This reality was God's presence that had taken over their lives and spiritual rather than material values were encouraged.

But now you must get rid of all such things – anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another. (Col 3:8)

Paul had observed that before physical violence erupted, it gnawed at one's heart and mind. Words often caused wounds that took longer to heal than actual physical blows.

Seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourself with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator. (Col 3:9-10)

Christ's disciples are recreated *in God's image* - the true Adam.

In that renewal, there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all. (Col 3:11)

Paul lived in a society that was fragmented – if not more so than ours. Various religions and races lived together in the city of Colossae. Paul never expected people to ignore or suppress cultural differences. Instead he invited them to discover ways that they were similar rather than dissimilar.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. (Col 3: 12)

As Christians, our objectives in suppressing violence are not only to establish good order in our societies and promote peaceful interactions. We are trying to imitate Christ's immense compassion toward all human beings, including sinners.

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (Col 3:13)

Forgiveness acts like a vaccine: in order to forgive, we work with the virus that makes us sick so that our bodies can transform it into a cure. Forgiveness transforms violent and divisive acts into ones of communion and peace.

Above all, clothe yourself with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. (Col 3:14-15)

What feelings hold sway over our hearts on any given day? Could they be haste, impatience, anger, indifference, and fear? The only thing that counteracts them is the power of love. We should follow St. Paul's advice to the Romans:

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:21)