

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Trinity IXX
October 6, 2024
rmcneely+

put off . . . the old man
which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts
. . . and put on the new man
which, after God, was created in righteousness and true holiness.

The Propers for this 19th Sunday after Trinity
Are rich in understanding
Of what a life as a Christian means.

St Paul gives us his famous analogy of “putting on the new man”.
It is one he will give to the Ephesians,
the Galatians,
the Corinthians
and the Colossians.

It is a powerful image
And one that was intensely meaningful to Paul
He knew all about putting on the new man.

In his early life
Paul was a ruthless avenger of the followers of this man Jesus:
Licensed by the Temple Authorities to capture
Arrest and prosecute this new “heretical” sect.
He was effective and feared
He was notorious and feared
among the new followers of Jesus;
This group that would become known as Christians.

It was sometime after the Ascension of Jesus
That Paul had learned of another cell of Christians in Damascus
He sought and had been given the power
to go there and capture them.

But on the way something transformational happened.

There was this almighty cosmic strike of intense light.
So powerful that it blasted Paul from his mount.
He was blinded.
And heard the voice of Jesus
“Saul, why persecutest thou me?”

That event ended Paul’s old life,
And Paul began a new life.
In that instant Paul put off the old man
And took on the new man
The new Paul.
He even began to use a new name: Paul, his Roman name
In place of his Hebrew name; Saul.
Rather than persecute Christians
Paul became perhaps the greatest evangelizer of Christians.

Yes. Paul knew all about putting off the old man.
Who better than Paul can tell us about putting off the old man
And putting on the new.
If we had questions about this transformation
Paul answers them and outlines the change.
He describes the attributes of the old and the new.

He tells us we are different from others
Whose understanding is darkened by ignorance
And the blindness of their heart
A blindness that Paul knows well
from his shock on the road to Damascus.

Paul describes the old man (referring to all mankind)
Who has given himself over to lasciviousness
And working all uncleanness in greed.
Who is corrupted by deceitful lusts.

He observes that the cosmic equivalent of the light that
transformed him on the road to Damascus
Is the word of Jesus, the Christ.
The Truth that renewed the spirit of the mind
Is the same power that transforms us.

Paul goes further and outlines the change from the old to the new;
Put away lying and speak the truth.
Do not let the sun set upon our wrath.
Do not give place to the devil.
Let the thief steal no more, but let him labor
So he may give to those in need.
Let no corruption utter from our mouths
But that which is good
That our words may minister grace.

He tells us to put away
All bitterness
Anger
Clamor and evil speaking
And to put away all malice.

The new person in Christ
Is kind, one to another
Is tender-hearted
Forgiving on another
Even as God, for the sake of the Christ
Has forgiven us.

He reminds us of our baptism and the Spirit of God
Which was infused in us at that time
And that we must not do anything to grieve that Holy Spirit
within us.

He reminds us that our confirmation sealed us
And that seal will bring us through
the day of our redemption;
the day of reckoning on the last day.

And that is the transformation of the old man
The old person into the new one.
And who we are to be in our new life.

Jesus gives us further insight into the transformation of that new
person in St Matthew's Gospel for this week:

The Healing of the man with the palsy.
The man fully paralyzed by disease.

His friends of great faith in Jesus
Brought him to Jesus on a stretcher
The people of Jesus' time understood that the cause of disease
Was sin.

Today, we know perhaps better than they
How our physical health is intimately connected
To our spiritual health.

Jesus did the important work
Forgiving the man's sins.
The Pharisees who witnessed it
Murmured among themselves
that only God could forgive sins.
This man Jesus was elevating himself as if he were God.
That was blasphemous and punishable by death.
They were incensed.

Jesus, knowing their thoughts
Voiced their complaint about Him
And challenged them:
They could not see the forgiveness He achieved
But could see the man be cured of his disease.
So Jesus cured the man,
Who picked up his bed before their eyes and walked home.

He who had been paralyzed, walked home
A new man.
With all the abilities,
Freshness, joy and hope for a new life.

The same new life that we enjoy
Our sins forgiven at baptism,
We are sealed by our confirmation
And nourished by Holy Communion with our Lord.

This week's Collect prays that in that new life
The Holy Spirit may direct and rule our hearts.

So how will we of St Thomas' live that new life?

What is the character of that new person?

How will our prayer for the Holy Spirit
to rule and direct our hearts
be answered?

Will we make the transformation that St Paul outlines?

Will our new lives be guided by what we have heard from Jesus?
By what was taught by Jesus?

Have we internalized the Truth that is in Jesus?

What awaits us if we do these things?

What awaits us if we do not?