



The corruptible body burdens the soul...



FRIENDS, this may sound a little strange, and perhaps even presumptuous, but I totally understand Saint Paul when he said, **“For to me life is Christ, and death is gain.”** In his letter to the Christians of Philippi—the first Christian church established in Europe—he wrote of the anguish he felt in not yet attaining life in heaven. He continues, **“If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, [for] that is far better. Yet that I remain [in] the flesh is more necessary for your benefit.”** (see Philippians 1:21-24)

Our first reading from the Book of Wisdom speaks proverbially about the body weighing down the soul. It’s a strange phrase, to be sure, but in the context and understanding of the spiritual life it’s totally reasonable. We have all been

created in the image and likeness of God, meaning we too have an intellect and will, as does our Creator. His is eternal and perfect, ours is a mere reflection.

As creatures with a fallen human nature, we are no longer able to live the total perfect freedom that we were created for. Due to original sin and its effects we strain spiritually under the weight of *concupiscence* (our inclination toward sin and evil). Corruption was not originally part of God’s creation; it came to be as a result of Adam and Eve’s fall from grace. First the angels fell, and then they influenced our first mother and father to fall as well. Remember too, our definition of grace is sharing freely, that is, unmerited, in God’s own Divine Life. An experience of grace for us is a true, unmerited sharing in the Divinity of God. What an awesome thought!

This concupiscence drives us to doubt. We can doubt ourselves and our abilities to be worthy of saving—even though Jesus told us he desires to save us! We can even doubt God’s ability to grant us the grace necessary to achieve his will for our lives. Concupiscence is a terrible burden.

We must remember the response in today’s Psalm, when the weight of concupiscence becomes too much of a burden for us. **“In every age, O Lord, you have been our refuge.”** God does not abandon his beloved children. Ever. If we can become rich in our prayer life, then we will know with certainty that God is Omniscient (all-knowing), Omnipresent (everywhere), Omnipotent (all-powerful), and we might even say Omniphilial (all-loving). And if God is all that, and we know his desire for our salvation, how can we doubt?

This is exactly the strength of faith Jesus is talking about in today’s Gospel. When he says, **“If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”** Our confidence in God’s providence must be stronger than our own love for mother, father, wife, husband, children, brothers and sisters, and even life itself. Jesus uses the word “hate” as a sure way to grab our attention. How do I know? Because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are themselves a very community of *Love*. **“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.”** If we can place our love of our own personal crosses, whatever they may be, ahead of our love of the people closest to us, then we are on the right path, heading for that narrow gate Jesus spoke of a couple of weeks ago.

And finally he says, **“In the same way, anyone of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”** We must not get so attached to the material things of this life and this world that they would stand in the way of our discipleship to our Lord. We know that God is supremely good, and there is nothing created under the heavens that can compare with that supreme love and goodness.