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LETTER TO THE ROMANS

"Conclusion of the Letter to the Romans"

Rom 14:5-6

One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

In his next instructions to the Christian community of Rome, St. Paul intends to avoid unnecessary discord. It is important to distinguish whether what is at stake is the truth or simply differing opinions. The truth must be firmly defended. On the other hand, differing views can be allowed in second-order matters and should not give rise to quarrels. Evidently, there were disputes in the Christian community about whether meat could be eaten. It is likely that it was especially the Judeo-Christians who were concerned about this issue, since meat could have been sacrificed to idols.

In any case, Paul considers it permissible to have different opinions on the matter and warns, above all, that no one should feel superior or condemn those who have a different point of view. Such behavior is detrimental to the community since everything should be done with our eyes fixed on the Lord and giving Him thanks. The Apostle then develops this theme further:

"I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for any one who thinks it unclean. If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died. So do not let what is good to you be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; he who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Rom 14:14-19).

Love of neighbor invites us to give up a freedom we have before God if our brother is scandalized by it. This applies in the context of this passage from the Letter to the Romans: if for our brother, who still has a weak conscience (cf. 1 Cor 8:9-11), it is a great difficulty - even a cause of scandal - for us to eat meat, it is better to abstain from it. St. Paul wisely advises us to prioritize love for our neighbor over personal freedom because *"the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."*

The community should focus on what contributes to peace. Therefore, things of lesser importance should not take precedence. Everything we do must be done in faith so that our actions be pleasing to God. Paul then encourages the community to support and strengthen one another, support the weak, and be of one mind (Rom. 15:1, 5-6).

At the end of his Letter to the Romans, the Apostle adds:

"I myself am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ, thus making it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on another man's foundation, but as it is written, 'They shall see who have never been told of him, and they shall understand who have never heard of him'" (Rom 15:14–21).

With these words, the Apostle to the Gentiles reaffirms the authority God has entrusted to him. He then announces his journey to Jerusalem (v. 25) and asks the community to

accompany him with their prayers (v. 30). After various messages of greeting, he again strongly exhorts the community with a phrase that also applies to our situation today:

"I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

Paul concludes this important epistle, in which he expounded to us things so essential for the faith, with a hymn of praise to God, to which we should join:

"Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory for evermore through Jesus Christ! Amen" (Rom 16:25-27).

Meditation on the Gospel of the day: <https://en.elijamission.net/faith-can-calm-storms/>