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## LETTER TO THE ROMANS

### The inevitable battle



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At the beginning of the sixth chapter of the Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul explains that, through baptism, we share in the death and resurrection of Christ and that, from that moment on, we must walk a new life. This new life requires an effort on our part to detach ourselves from our old, sinful and vain life. Thus writes the Apostle:

*“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” (Rom 6:11-14).*

The fight against concupiscence is unavoidable, and we must wage it. It will accompany us throughout our lives, even if, with God's help, we manage to restrain our desires more and more. We must never give up this fight, because if our passions gain control over us, we will be deprived of our freedom. This fight must be waged with prudence, determination and perseverance.

God knows our weaknesses, and therefore we can always take refuge in Him and be strengthened. This means getting up after defeats and continuing to fight. Indeed, our whole life must now be devoted to the Kingdom of God. If in our past life our mouth uttered vain and confused words, now, under the influence of grace, it must utter words of comfort and truth. If we were once willing to do anything to satisfy our passions, now we must put all our strength at the service of the Kingdom of God. St. Paul expresses this in the continuation of his epistle:

*“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your*

*natural limitations. For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification."* (Rom 6:17-19).

The decisive point is that the Romans obeyed Christ's teaching and cooperated with the grace granted to them. It is the Spirit of God who acts in believers, guiding their steps along the path of peace.

St Paul insists that sin must no longer enslave Christians, but that they must become "slaves of righteousness". We could also express this in the following way: the faithful voluntarily submit themselves to the yoke of Christ. This yoke leads to holiness and life, while slavery to sin leads to death.

Later, the Apostle draws our attention to a very important point that helps us to understand our condition better:

*"I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members."* (Rom 7:18b-19, 21-23).

Here St Paul describes the struggle that rages in the hearts of the faithful: they want to serve the Lord consciously, they love what is good and want to put it into practice, and they perceive the splendour of truth in God's commandments, which attracts them to keep them. However, they succumb again and again to the law of sin that still acts in them, even though they do not want to.

Certainly, we are all familiar with this situation on the path of following Christ. St. Paul's clear description of this inner contradiction can serve as a guide for us and help us see that it is not just a personal problem when we are weak. The Apostle also experienced this contradiction, as each of us does in our own way.

However, we must not dwell on this difficulty, for grace impels us to strive for virtue and to unfold the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that He may work ever more effectively in us and equip us for the fight.

In view of this inner struggle, St. Paul exclaims: “*Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (Rom 7:24). To which he himself responds: “*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin*” (v. 25).

Thus, we are entrusted with this battle against the works of the flesh, which we must fight with the help of the Spirit of God.

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**Meditation on the day's Gospel:** <https://en.elijamission.net/false-prophets-3/>