

# Faith and Right Worship

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

Rom 15.1-7

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one God, amen.

We hear, today, in the epistle, this line from Paul which says, "We then, who are strong, ought to bear with the scruples of the weak." What does this mean?

Well, part of our answer is in the context of where where we are in the Church year. This week we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration. We have the icon here where Christ is up on the mountain, Moses, and Elias are up there with him, and Peter, James, and John are also up on the mountain with him.

And we have this picture, this icon, set before us. This image set before us of Christ transfigured. And we have other images that come to the forefront of our mind with this feast and one of those images is Moses on the mountain. . . One of the reasons why he's in the icon right?

And we know that when Moses was up on the mountain he was receiving the law from God.

He's receiving the law from God. God is teaching him how to instruct His people to live. How to worship and how to behave in the world. Right?

And so, Moses comes down from the mountain. And when he comes down, what does he find? That the people are worshipping the golden calf.

Their worship—their faith, because our worship comes from our faith—we can understand that their faith was improper. It is the proper faith that is the corrective.

And much of the rest of the Exodus Leviticus and Numbers and then Deuteronomy are about that right faith being formed in the people so that then the people can worship properly.

It is the same for us here, now—our worship expresses what it is we believe.

So St. Paul says to us today, WE who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak. And when he's saying we, he means us, the covenant people of God, those people who have this right relationship with God, those people who are part of Christ's body, which is the Church.

So what, what does that have to do with today?

Well, we just celebrated this feast of the Transfiguration, and the Church puts this image before us and tells us that we are—every time we come to worship, every time we come to Divine Liturgy, we ascend the mountain of the Lord.

We make an ascent. You know, if you put the church up like this, and if we come up, and we're coming up to the Holy Altar, to venerate the Gospel, to receive Holy Communion, we are ascending and we have this experience of and encounter with God on the mountain.

And so, what happens when we come down a mountain? In other words, what happens when we go back out into the world?

Sometimes it's easy to be tempted to leave our faith at church. And do what we want to do the rest of the week, right? I come on Sundays, and that's good.

But here we can remember Paul—the scruples of the weak— these scruples can kind of tempt me to lower myself down to that kind of life, right?

That kind of life is, is not true life, but a life that would take me off the ladder to heaven, right?

So we have to be careful not to allow these scruples, these cares of the world to grasp hold on us.

They can be just mundane things. It doesn't have to be great sins. They're just mundane things of, you know—I'm getting busy or putting myself into, I don't know, some kind of entertainment that I really enjoy or something.

If those things then take me away and affect my faith and change the way that I worship and

interact with God then, those scruples of the weak are pulling me down from that mountain and keeping me down—not allowing me to make that ascent. So we have to be careful not to fall to this temptation of being pulled away by these things of the world, the scruples of the weak. The cares of this world.

And Paul tells us what the antidote is to that. It's worship, right? It's glorifying God properly.

He also says that we are to please our neighbor for good, but not to be entangled. So we are to be with those who are in the world who maybe aren't part of the church or aren't even believers.

It's okay to be with them, but we can't be entangled with what it is they're doing or a lot of those things that they're doing to pull us away from our Savior, our God.

So a couple of things we can do...

We worship here, we take this experience of worship, we take it home with us. We have a place where we worship in our house, icons, incense, candles, and we take that experience and we bring it into our home.

You make that, you bring this experience of worship, this experience of Christ on the mountain, and we bring that to our home. So that's one way. We create a space in our home where we can have that experience.

The next way is that we take that experience from here and home, and we have that in our hearts with us all the time by trying to pray when we go about our day.

Before we rise, Lord have mercy on me and protect me.

You see someone who speeds by you on the road and you're like, "oh man, he must be in trouble"—Lord have mercy on them.

You have to take an exam, you have to do something important for work, or anything important—Lord help me to learn how to be, give me strength to do what I need to do.

So we carry that prayer with us, through our whole lives, and that, that can then pull those around us, with us, instead of us being pulled with them.

So we can show the way to Christ. We can take this experience of having an experience of

Christ in the Holy Eucharist and we can bring it to all parts of our lives and therefore bring it to others

The last thing you can do is to invite others to church. Maybe it's someone who's been in this community who maybe they come sometimes, maybe they don't—invite them to come back.

Maybe it's not somebody who's never been a part of this community. Invite them to come to Church.

Maybe they see something new that is different because you have this experience of Christ shining on your face—because this experience of Christ is transformative. Right?

And if it's a real thing, then when other people come into contact with us, they will know that something is different about us. Right? So, invite people to come if you see that they are interested, invite them to come and be a part of this body of Christ.

So we ask, through the prayers of St. Peter, James, and John, Moses, and Elias, that the Lord would strengthen us in our right worship and faith so that we can share it with other people. Amen.