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Study Questions for the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*

The First and Second Letters of St. Paul
to the Corinthians

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THE FIRST LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:8.** How does the OT describe the “day of the Lord”? In terms of history, how does the “day of the Lord” come about?
2. **1:17.** What is Paul trying to stress about his ministry? When Paul says he does not speak “with eloquent wisdom”, what is he saying about the power of the gospel—and about his own mission?
3. **Word Study: Wisdom (1:20).** What does “wisdom” mean in the ordinary usage of the word in Paul’s day? How does Paul use the OT Wisdom tradition (especially in the third sense referred to in the note)? Why, in Paul’s view, can wisdom not be equated with the ingenuity of philosophers and thinkers?
4. **1:23.** Look up Deut 21:22–23. Why was the crucifixion a stumbling block to Jews? How did Paul deal with this difficulty? Why would the crucifixion be foolishness to Gentiles?

For application

1. **1:8.** Look at the note for this passage. Why do you think Paul reminds the Corinthians ever so gently of the Day of Judgment right at the beginning of his letter? Look up this topic in the *Catechism* (CCC 678, 682). What in your life will Christ judge at the Last Judgment?
2. **1:10–17.** What perspective should help us overcome the growth of factions in our parish or diocese? Where should our supreme allegiance be? How would you answer Paul’s rhetorical questions? Whose position should you be taking, and how would you know you held it?
3. **1: 18–25.** Review the notes for these verses. In that context, what might Paul say about theological and disciplinary issues that can tend to divide parishes and dioceses? How do you make God’s wisdom and God’s “weakness” your own?
4. **1:26–31.** How much education in the Catholic faith have you had? What do you think of it? What people contributed to the understanding of the faith you have? Whether you are well or badly educated in the faith, what attitude does Paul counsel you to take?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:4.** How are proclamations of the gospel made effective? What is the main idea running through this passage?
2. **2:9.** After Paul paraphrases Is 64:4, he quotes Sir 1:10. How does he draw these two passages together? What is he trying to stress?
3. **2:10.** Who is uniquely qualified to probe the mind of God? How and about what does this same agent enlighten us?
4. **2:16.** According to the note, what does Paul conclude from Isaiah’s rhetorical question?

For application

1. **2:2.** For an evangelist, what does it mean to “know nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and him crucified”? How might you apply this passage when you share your faith?
2. **2:5.** Does your faith rest on the power of God or on what you have learned from your parents or catechists? If the former, what can you share that demonstrates that fact? If the latter, what needs to happen for your faith to rest on the power of God—and what do you plan to do about it?
3. **2:13–14.** In the context of chaps. 12–14 of this letter, how do you read these verses? What is a “spiritual” and an “unspiritual” person in Paul’s understanding? Why are spiritual gifts not understood by an “unspiritual” person? What does it mean to discern something spiritually?
4. **2:14–15.** Does Paul mean to imply that the person with spiritual gifts is not subject to the Church’s oversight? If not, by whom is he judged when he exercises gifts?

Chapter 3*For understanding*

1. **3:5–23.** If the ministry is primarily the work of God, what two points must teachers of the flock recognize about their efforts? How must members of the faithful regard their teachers?
2. **3:10.** In the OT, how were architects engaged in work on the Temple endowed by God? What is the role of King Solomon here? In what way does Paul compare himself (at least implicitly) with Solomon?
3. **Word Study: Suffer Loss (3:15).** How does the Greek OT use this verb? How do the Gospels use it? Does the context of 1 Cor 3:15 suggest what Paul is alluding to?
4. **3:15.** In a literal sense, what is Paul saying about some Christian workers? What kind of agent does the OT often depict fire as being? How does Catholic tradition interpret Paul’s teaching in the light of Purgatory?

For application

1. **3:1–4.** What does Paul mean in this text (especially v. 3), when he uses the expression “of the flesh”? In your dealings with other Christians, in what ways do you tend to act as a person “of the flesh”?
2. **3:5–9.** Who are your favorite Catholic evangelists, theologians, or speakers? Why are they your favorites? Are your attitudes about them in conformity with Paul’s counsel in these verses?
3. **3:11–14.** What (or who) is the foundation of your life? What are you building on that foundation? At the end of your life, will your efforts prove durable? If you instruct others (such as pupils or your own children), how will your instruction have benefited them—or you?
4. **3:16–17** After reading these verses, how would you describe yourself? Is that the way your teachers regard you? What kind of care should your catechists, teachers, or pastor take of your development in the faith? If you are a catechist, teacher, or pastor, how do you fulfill the responsibility described by Paul? (What does Paul suggest should happen if you do not?)

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:4.** What is Paul saying about the state of his conscience? How is the final verdict on his ministry to come?
2. **4:6.** When Paul cautions the Corinthians “not to go beyond what is written”, to what is he referring? What is he trying to halt? Some commentators use this verse to defend a *sola Scriptura* (the Bible only) approach, but how does Paul himself contradict such an interpretation?
3. **4:8–13.** How does Paul reprimand self-righteous Corinthians for egoism and unfairness? What is he actually saying about them? To what are the Corinthians exposing themselves?
4. **4:15.** What is the connection between fatherhood and priesthood in the ancient Near East? How does it carry over into the New Covenant? In what Vatican II document is this connection confirmed?

For application

1. **4:3–5.** Why is it not advisable to “grade” yourself for the way you live your Christian life? From what single judge can you expect just commendation or blame?
2. **4:7–8.** Name one thing about your personality, character, talents, or accomplishments that arises entirely from yourself (as opposed to what you have learned or received from others). When it comes to your relationship to God, do any of these traits or achievements stand up as your own? If not, what can you be proud of?
3. **4:12–13.** Paul implies that he takes the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:11–12, 38–48) literally. When you are reviled or slandered, how do you respond? How do you imitate Paul (4:16)?
4. **4:20.** If the kingdom of God does not consist of mere words, of what does it consist? Whose?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:5.** What does Paul mean by commanding the Corinthian Church to deliver the incestuous man over “to Satan”? What does he anticipate will be destroyed? What is Paul’s hidden assumption?
2. **5:6.** What is the significance of leaven? What does it symbolize here?
3. **5:7–8.** What spiritual lesson is Paul drawing from the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Why does Paul mention the Paschal sacrifice of Christ in this context? What are the eucharistic overtones?
4. **5:13.** To what Mosaic provision is Paul alluding when he quotes from Deuteronomy? Why?

For application

1. **5:1–2.** Why is it important for practicing Catholics to take a stand against the sexual immorality that sometimes occurs within a church community? How “hard line” a stand does Paul take? What does his stand say about your own?
2. **5:6.** According to this verse, what is the effect of sexual immorality on the Christian

community? Look up the concept of *scandal* in the *Catechism* (CCC 2284–85). Why is tolerance for sexual sin so pernicious?

3. **5:7–8.** What is the “old leaven” that Paul wants you to cleanse from your heart? What reason does he give for that cleansing? What is the nature of the “unleavened bread” in v. 8 with which you are to replace it?
4. **5:11–12.** What would Paul say you should do regarding fellow Catholics who persist in leading immoral lives? In the context of this chapter, what would be his rationale for advising you to avoid associating with them? What does charity demand—and for whom—in such cases?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Sanctified (6:11).** What does it mean for things to be sanctified, or “made holy”? What does it mean for persons to be sanctified? How does Baptism sanctify? How is the challenge to grow in sanctity supported by Jesus’ and Paul’s prayers?
2. **6:16.** According to Genesis, why is the proper context for sexual union the covenant of marriage? Why is it such a serious sin to become one with a prostitute?
3. **6:20.** How might the marital theme that runs through the preceding verses be used to interpret the meaning of Jesus’ death? What is the implied contrast in Paul’s words that we should “glorify God with [our] body”?
4. **Essay: Shun Immorality, Shun Idolatry.** What is the connection between sexual immorality and idolatry in the religions of the ancient Near East? What, to Paul, is the theological significance of the body, and what is the role of self-mastery in his view? How does Paul emphasize the connection between these sins by appealing to the experience of Israel? What, then, should be the lesson for us in the modern age?

For application

1. **6:1–6.** What principle of behavior is Paul advocating for Christians who have legal grievances against one another? How practical do you think his advice is for Christians today? If you think it impractical, what then should modern Christians do in such cases?
2. **6:7.** Compare this verse with Mt 5:38–42. How does it apply the Sermon on the Mount? How would you answer Paul’s (admittedly rhetorical) questions for yourself?
3. **6:13.** How is your body meant for the Lord, and how do you serve him with it? How would you apply Paul’s comment that “the Lord” is meant “for the body” to yourself? What does it mean for the Lord to be meant for your body?
4. **6:19–20.** If your life is not your own, whose is it? Why? If your life does not belong to you, how do you glorify God with your sexuality, given your present circumstances?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:5.** What kind of a safeguard are the conjugal rights shared by husband and wife? According to Paul’s teaching, what does periodic continence give the couple opportunities to do? According to Catholic teaching, what does periodic continence

allow, and what can it promote?

2. **7:7.** Why does Paul uphold celibacy as the ideal state in life for believers? How is Paul's position unlike that of certain Corinthian ascetics?
3. **7:15.** What does the "Pauline privilege" mean? What are the conditions that need to be met before it applies?
4. **7:39.** How long does the marriage covenant last? What does the expression "in the Lord" mean for the surviving spouse who wants to remarry?

For application

1. **7:4.** How might marriage partners apply this verse to themselves if they are tempted to use sexual intercourse as a tool of manipulation or control or as a weapon? How might attitudes of "independence" in a marriage change by admitting the mutual rights of spouses toward each other?
2. **7:17–24.** Read these verses and then the note for them. What "unchangeable circumstances" were you in when you came to a mature faith in Christ? Which of them did you want to change? How might you be content with what you cannot (or should not) change?
3. **7:29–31.** What does it mean to be "detached" from your circumstances? Is Paul advocating a passionless existence or something else (v. 32)?
4. **7:35.** Whether you are married or single, how might you give your "undivided devotion" to the Lord in your present circumstances? In other words, how can you use your present state in life to grow in holiness?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:1–11:1.** Why was the question of eating idol food a significant moral challenge for many believers living in a pagan environment? What is Paul's position?
2. **8:7–13.** Into what two groups does the controversy over eating idol food divide people? If the "strong" are free to eat such food, how must they temper that freedom? What does Paul warn the "strong" about?
3. **8:8.** To what extent is Paul ambivalent toward idol food? What does he caution in spite of that ambivalence?
4. **Essay: Paul, Idol Food, and the Jerusalem Council.** In what way does Paul appear to be at odds with the Jerusalem Council over the matter of eating idol food? What are some unsatisfactory attempts to ease the tension between Paul and the Council? What clarifications help us understand that, on a theological level, he was actually in agreement with the Council?

For application

1. **8:1–3.** To what danger does Paul point in the possession of knowledge? How can you use knowledge (for example, the knowledge of the faith) to build others up?
2. **8:4–8.** How does your knowledge that only God governs the universe apply when someone invites you to dabble in esoteric spiritual practices, such as apparently innocent occult games? Should you take up practices of other religions? What is the danger to others that Paul points to in verses 7–8?
3. **8:9–13.** How would Paul respond to you if you objected, "Well, if this brother is so

weak that he falls into sin because of what he sees me do, it's his problem"? What is your responsibility to those whose conscience is more delicate on certain matters than your own?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:1–27.** How does Paul use his own example as a challenge to the “strong” in Corinth? What suggests that Paul still has the issue of idol food uppermost in mind in this chapter?
2. **9:5.** In what two ways can Paul’s statement about being accompanied by a wife be understood? What is the background of the discipline of clerical celibacy in the Latin Rite? What is the practice of the Eastern Rite churches? What was the practice in apostolic times?
3. **9:9.** What point is Paul making by referring to Deut 25:4?
4. **9:20.** Why did Paul continue to maintain certain Jewish traditions even though he was a Christian? What was Paul’s ethnic background?

For application

1. **9:3–14.** How would you use these verses to explain the practice of giving parish priests a salary or of paying a stipend to the parish for the performance of a wedding or a funeral?
2. **9:16.** What is your own responsibility to preach the gospel? How aware are you of that responsibility, and how seriously do you take it?
3. **9:22–23.** How might your practice of Catholic living be adapted to the needs of the scrupulous, the easygoing, the strenuously rigorous, or the cynical or doubting persons with whom you associate? How can you be “all things to all men” without compromising your own integrity or watering down your faith?
4. **9:27.** The Church requires certain minimal practices of penance and mortification (such as seasonal fasts) and recommends that you do more than the minimum. Can you suggest practices that might be good to adopt? How might someone go beyond the minimum required?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:1–13.** In comparing the Corinthians with the Israelites in the desert, how does Paul liken the blessings both groups received? What must the Corinthians guard against?
2. **10:2.** What did the solidarity of the Israelites with Moses in the Red Sea prefigure? What does the Exodus prefigure?
3. **10:7–10** What four examples of the Israelites’ apostasy during the Exodus does Paul present to the Corinthians? Why does he gather these food-related episodes together?
4. **10:16.** What is the “cup of blessing”? What use did Jesus make of it at the Last Supper? In what sense do we “participate” in it?
5. **10:25–30.** If Paul opposed eating idol food in temples, how did he feel about eating

sacrificial meat sold afterward in the open market? Under what circumstances were Christians to abstain from such meat?

For application

1. **10:12.** In what ways are you in danger of overconfidence in your beliefs or practice of the faith? What examples from your own experience can you cite to illustrate the danger of presuming your own stability?
2. **10:14–17** According to Paul, what is the effect of the Eucharist on the person who consumes it? When you receive Communion, how aware are you of this effect?
3. **10:18–22.** How would Paul view alternative spiritualities, such as New Age views or pagan mysticism? What does v. 21 say to a Christian with an interest in such spiritualities?
4. **10:31.** What are some of the mundane things you do that you could devote to the glory of God? How could eating, drinking, or doing anything “ordinary” glorify God? How did St. Thérèse of Lisieux look at everyday activities?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:3–16.** What is the subject of scholarly disagreement in these verses? What point of view is expressed in the note? What is implied by Paul’s guidelines for dealing with the problem?
2. **11:6.** What do many believe the veil signifies? Why does the Catholic Church no longer require women to wear head coverings at Mass?
3. **11:17–34.** What problems developed because of the ancient Christian custom of having a common meal before the liturgy? What three historical factors put this crisis in perspective?
4. **11:26.** What does the separate Consecration of bread and wine at Mass represent? Why does Paul stress that unworthy reception of Communion brings judgment upon the perpetrators? What is in Paul’s mind in making this statement?

For application

1. **11:3–10.** Given the casual dress styles of this era, do you “dress up” (more or less formally) to attend the liturgy or “dress down” (casually)? What is your rationale for dressing as you do to attend Mass? Whom does your style of dress honor?
2. **11:17–22.** How do you prepare yourself to attend the liturgy? How would you evaluate your “liturgical manners” (for example, the manner in which you express your respect for the Eucharistic Presence or your manner of participating in the liturgy)? How careful are you to respect the desire for quiet on the part of those who wish to pray before or after Mass?
3. **11:23–26.** What is the state of your belief in transubstantiation, the transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus at the Consecration? If you have problems believing in this real transformation, what have you done to resolve them?
4. **11:27–28.** How do you examine the state of your soul before you go to Communion? If you were to receive Communion while in a state of serious (mortal) sin, what does Paul say you would be doing? What, then, should you do if you are in a state of

serious sin? What should you do before going to Communion if you are *not* in a state of serious sin?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:4–6.** From whom do charismatic gifts flow? How is the Trinity the model for these gifts?
2. **12:7.** Why are charisms given? To what do they unite us? What is the Catholic distinction between the role of charisms and that of sanctifying grace?
3. **12:13.** If the “Body of Christ” is not simply a metaphor, what is it? What does the Holy Spirit do in the Body? How does union with Christ affect social and ethnic differences? To what does the expression “drink of one Spirit” refer?
4. **12:31.** Why is apostleship given pride of place among the ministerial gifts? What is the mission of apostles? Who carries on their work today?

For application

1. **12:3.** What is Paul’s “rule of thumb” for discerning the origin of a spiritual activity or manifestation? How would you compare this “rule” with 1 Jn 3:4–10 and 4:1–4? How would you apply this rule to a charismatic leader who is a powerful preacher but denies that Jesus is God?
2. **12:4–7.** Read CCC 2539–41 on the subject of *envy* (one of the “seven deadly sins”). How might these verses address the problem of envy among people who work in ministry? If the same Spirit works in all who have charisms, how can one worker be envious of the success of another?
3. **12:22–26.** What need does the Church have of her weaker members? What need does she have for the lesser charisms? How ought you to respond when a parish member is criticized for a problem—or praised for an achievement?
4. **12:29–31.** How should you view a Christian who appears to do well in one area of life but seems to have no talent in another? How do you view leaders who are strong in one area (“a great preacher”) but weak in another (“not good with people”)? What is Paul saying about such differences here?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:1–13.** What relation does this chapter have to Paul’s discussion of charismatic gifts? What does Paul insist that love (charity) must do? What becomes of charisms if they are exercised without love?
2. **13:4–7.** Why can love not be reduced to a feeling that comes and goes? Who is the object of the love poured into our hearts by the Spirit? What are some of the vices contrary to charity that Paul mentions?
3. **13:12.** What kind of mirror was manufactured in Corinth? What was the quality of the reflected image in such a mirror? What contrast does Paul draw between a mirror image and face-to-face vision?
4. **13:13.** What is missing from the translation quoted in the note? What is the relationship of faith, hope, and love to the present? To eternity? Why are these three

virtues called “theological” virtues? Why is love the greatest of the three?

For application

1. **13:1–3.** Who loses when works of great spiritual power are done with impure or uncharitable motives? In these three “if . . . then” statements, what happens in the “then” half? If you have ever done good acts for bad motives, what have the consequences been for you?
2. **13:5.** If love is not arrogant, what is it? If love is not rude, what is it? If love does not insist on its own way, how does it act toward the other person? If love is not irritable or resentful, what is its attitude?
3. **13:7.** What does it mean to bear, believe, hope, and endure “all things”? How do you think love (charity) might respond to falsehoods, lies, and personal attacks on others? What does God ask when the going gets rough for you?
4. **13:11.** What are some of the “childish ways” that might characterize the response of people to charismatic expressions—whether they consider themselves charismatic or not? In the context of this chapter, what is a more adult way of viewing charismatic spirituality?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:1.** What is prophecy? Why does Paul prefer it to other charismatic gifts?
2. **14:21.** What is Is 28:11–12 about in its original context? How does Paul apply it to the charism of tongues?
3. **14:27–28.** What three pastoral guidelines does Paul give for speaking in tongues in a Christian assembly? What does he assume about the control of this gift?
4. **14:34–35.** Though Paul enjoins silence on women in public worship, what are the exceptions to this? What is he prohibiting?

For application

1. **14:1.** What attitude does Paul recommend toward charismatic gifts? What should be your aim in desiring them?
2. **14:12.** What gifts do you have that you can use for building up the Church? How have you used them toward that end? How would you know that the Holy Spirit (rather than mere human motives) was behind your use of these gifts?
3. **14:26.** How do you prepare yourself for liturgical or private worship? How fully do you participate when worship begins? How does your participation (for example, by saying the responses at the Mass) affect others around you?
4. **14:27–33.** Though the exercise of charismatic gifts is sometimes described as “ecstatic”, what does Paul have to say about self-control? If you are blessed with charismatic manifestations, how do you exercise control over them? According to v. 33, why should you control them?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:12.** How might denial of the resurrection of the dead have a Jewish background?

A Greek one? What would result from a Christian denial of the resurrection?

2. **15:29.** Why does this passage baffle interpreters? What seems to have been the practice of living believers? Look up 2 Mac 12:39–45; why does the writer praise Judas Maccabeus for taking up a collection for the dead? What is Paul's point in referring to the practice of being "baptized on behalf of the dead"?
3. **15:42–44.** What does Paul say our risen bodies will be like? What four qualities of the risen bodies of the saints does Catholic theology enumerate?
4. **15:52.** What are two uses of the trumpet in ancient Israel that fill out the background of Paul's image of the "last trumpet"? How is trumpet imagery used in the Prophets?

For application

1. **15:10.** Who are you, by the grace of God? When it comes to your life with God, how do you feel about yourself? How has the grace of God in your regard not been in vain?
2. **15:12–19.** What is your own belief about the resurrection of the dead? How firmly do you hold to the Christian belief on this subject in your own regard—especially if you are facing a life-threatening illness or immediate danger of death? When people say, "When you're dead, you're dead!", how do you respond internally? What do you say?
3. **15:46–49.** What does the expression "Grace builds on nature" mean? How does the spiritual build on the physical? Do you regard your body as something from which to be liberated, or as something on which to build? What is Paul suggesting the pattern of God's action to be?
4. **15:56–57.** How is sin the "sting" of death? Since everyone dies, how does sin make a difference in the experience? How does Jesus give you the victory that removes that sting (even though death itself will occur)?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:1–4.** Why did Paul spend so much energy collecting donations on his third missionary journey?
2. **16:8.** From what city was Paul writing his first letter to the Corinthians? When did he himself arrive at Corinth?
3. **16:19.** Who were Aquila and Prisca, and what was their relationship with Paul?
4. **16:22.** What does the expression *marana tha* mean? When was it used? What does this imply?

For application

1. **16:1.** Who are the "saints" Paul is talking about? How might you yourself be considered a "saint" in this sense? How badly do you want to become a saint in the customary meaning of that term?
2. **16:13.** Why does faith demand watchfulness, firmness, courage, and strength? How does your own personal faith demand these virtues in your current environment? Given the drift of modern society, how might these virtues become even more necessary in the future?
3. **16:20.** What is the "sign of peace" you share at the liturgy supposed to signify for life

outside the liturgy? In an ideal situation, what should your relationship with fellow Catholics be like? How do you practice hospitality toward them?

4. **16:22.** Why does Paul wish a curse on anyone who “has no love for the Lord”? Is he wishing evil on them or acknowledging the consequences of their choice? How is one who loves the Lord blessed?

THE SECOND LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:15.** What is the “double pleasure” referred to in this verse? In other words, how many visits to Corinth did Paul plan to make? Why did he change those plans?
2. **1:17.** What charge is Paul arguing against here? Why does Paul say he was not fluctuating between Yes and No? What was he trying to avoid?
3. **Word Study: Amen (1:20).** What is the Hebrew origin of the word *Amen*? How is it used in the OT? In what context is it used in the NT? What does it express there? Why is Christ called the “Amen”? How does Jesus himself use this expression?
4. **1:22.** With what are Christians inwardly “stamped”? What did a seal stand for in ancient times? What does Paul’s teaching point to in this context, and what is its importance for the Christian? What does the term *guarantee* mean in this passage?

For application

1. **1:3–4.** When did you last bless God for the comfort you have received from him? What was the nature of the comfort and of the affliction that preceded it? Have you been able to use this comfort to help others who are suffering in a similar way?
2. **1:8–11.** How do you pray in time of suffering? Has suffering affected your trust in God? Can you apply v. 9 to your own experience?
3. **1:17–20.** How often do you find that your faith vacillates between Yes and No—between on and off, hot and cold, zealous and slothful? What tends to make you swing in one direction or the other? Have you found ways to strengthen your faith, so that it increasingly gravitates toward Yes?
4. **1:22.** Have you ever been aware that the Spirit of God has actually been given to you? Of what is the Spirit a guarantee?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:3.** What may have been the letter to which Paul is referring in this verse? How do some scholars think this correspondence has been preserved, and how certain is their opinion?
2. **2:7.** Why does Paul not want remedial punishment for sinners to be unduly prolonged or excessively harsh? Where else in 2 Cor does Paul warn about the devil’s schemes?
3. **Word Study: Leads Us in Triumph (2:14).** To what Roman practice is this

expression linked? What were the Roman ceremonies intended to do? How does Paul adapt this traditional notion?

4. **2:14–16.** How are the terms *aroma* and *fragrance* used in the first five books of the OT? How does Sirach use the terms? How does Paul interpret these understandings in the light of the New Covenant?

For application

1. **2:1–4.** How do you tend to administer correction to those under you? How do those you correct receive it? Does your manner of delivering correction communicate love or respect for those you must discipline? How is this achieved?
2. **2:5–7.** If the corrections you deliver are ever done publicly (for example, before the family or a work group), how do you ensure that the group members maintain respect for those being corrected?
3. **2:15.** What do you think a relationship would be like that communicates “the fragrance of Christ” to those involved in it? Which of your Christian relationships would you characterize as “aromatic” of Christ? If some are not spiritually “fragrant”, what do you think is causing the bad odor?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1.** Why were written referrals used for traveling missionaries? How did Paul’s opponents apparently use these letters? Why did Paul feel that he did not need such letters?
2. **3:6.** How has tradition understood Paul’s contrast between the letter and the Spirit? What are the benefits of life in the Spirit?
3. **3:7.** Why did Moses hide his face after speaking directly with the Lord on Mt. Sinai? What was he veiling from the eyes of the Israelites?
4. **3:18.** Whose image is being formed in us by the Spirit? What real life experiences, now and in the future, are part of this transformation?

For application

1. **3:5.** To what extent do you depend on Christ to accomplish *anything* in the Christian life? Is your answer a matter of “correct theology” or of personal experience? If the latter, what experience drove the point home to you?
2. **3:6b.** At what point did your obedience to the gospel stop being mainly a matter of keeping the Church’s rules and start being a matter of love for God?
3. **3:15–16.** How would you apply these verses to your own reading of Scripture? For example, what do you think is happening when a Scripture passage you have read a dozen times suddenly springs to life and has some personal meaning to you?
4. **3:18.** How is it possible for you to “become what you behold”? If you continually feed your gaze with violent or erotic images, what kind of person are you likely to become? Similarly, what will you begin to look like if you spend a lot of time with God?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:6.** How does Paul view conversion? How is conversion like the dawn of history? What does the prophet Isaiah have to say about the role of light? What was Paul's own experience of the light of Christ?
2. **4:7.** What does the difference between earthenware and treasure point to in this passage? What cultic expression from the OT is Paul using here? What do we carry in our suffering bodies, then?
3. **4:8–11.** How does the grace of apostleship safeguard Paul? When do hardships conform us to Christ?
4. **4:17.** How is the Hebrew notion of "glory" conceptualized? What cannot compare with it?

For application

1. **4:4.** How does the "god of this world" blind people's minds? Even though the words of the gospel message are simple enough to understand in themselves, how do people with blinded minds fail to see their meaning?
2. **4:6.** One form of devotion is to meditate on the face of Christ in its various aspects—for example, on the face of Christ suffering. When have you meditated on this face? What has been the fruit of it for you? If you have never meditated on that face, try doing it now.
3. **4:13.** What is the connection between belief and speech? As an exercise, try reading the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed aloud to yourself, and after each statement say something like, "I, [state your name], really believe that!" What "spirit" results from an exercise like this?
4. **4:16–18.** In that same spirit, examine your current physical, emotional, and spiritual condition. Then ask yourself what your future is likely to be in each of these areas. For example, in which area are you getting stronger or weaker? How do you know? Which of these areas needs the most work?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **Essay: Not Made with Hands.** What contrast does Scripture draw between the works of human hands and those made without hands? What four examples of the latter works does the essay provide?
2. **5:13.** What two interpretations may be given for the expression "beside ourselves" in this verse?
3. **5:17.** What does Baptism accomplish under the New Covenant? What happens to the old order of creation? How did the Prophets of Israel envision this renewal?
4. **5:21.** How is Jesus "made to be sin"? In the Greek OT, what is "sin" a shorthand word for? To what may the expression "the righteousness of God" in Paul's writings refer?

For application

1. **5:6–9.** How great is your love of your earthly life, and how great is your desire to be with the Lord in heaven? Which of these two loves is greater? Whom do you aim to

please with the way you live your life?

2. **5:13–14.** What does it mean for the love of Christ to urge us on? How does that affect your attitudes and your behavior? How willing are you to be thought foolish by others when it comes to your faith?
3. **5:16–17.** How many “important people” do you know? What makes them important? According to what criteria do you consider someone important? For example, how might it affect your point of view to learn that someone socially unimportant is baptized? For that matter, what does it matter (practically speaking) that you yourself are a new creation?
4. **5:20.** Have you ever argued or fought with God? Who “won”? How might you and God need to be reconciled? How often do you work and/or pray for others to be reconciled with him?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:2.** In the passage from Isaiah that Paul cites, how does the prophet outline the mission of the Servant Messiah? How does the Messiah fulfill his mission? In this context, what is Paul stressing to the Corinthians?
2. **6:8.** If being treated as an impostor is the first of seven accusations hurled at Paul by his opponents, what are the other six (vv. 8–10)? How does he fight off these false charges?
3. **6:14.** What OT passage is Paul probably using as inspiration for his comments? What is the passage about? What is Paul trying to say by citing this passage—and what is he *not* saying?
4. **6:16–18.** What point is Paul making by linking together a chain of OT Scripture passages (see note)? With what events and efforts are these passages connected? With what was the sacredness of the Temple sanctuary incompatible? Why was the sacrificial system of the Temple established? How do these principles apply to believers?

For application

1. **6:2.** If modern people are advised by their culture to “seize the day”, then what day would Paul tell them to seize?
2. **6:3–8.** How willing would you be to have your reputation destroyed—or, short of that, to have your efforts and good intentions ignored or overlooked—in order for someone you do not know to come to salvation? How does your answer compare with Paul’s catalogue of sufferings that he willingly accepts?
3. **6:14.** How do you handle relationships with non-Christian relatives or friends that are dangerous to your faith? Why do you continue in them or pull away from them? For that matter, how might Paul’s advice not to be “mismatched with unbelievers” apply to relationships with *Christian* relatives or friends that are dangerous to your faith?
4. **6:17–18.** How “countercultural” is your practice of your faith? If Paul were still alive, would he recognize the difference between your conduct and that of the world around you and know which of the two was Christian?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:2.** Of what do Paul's critics, by implication, accuse him? To what does he appeal in reply?
2. **7:5–16.** What function do these verses serve in the letter?
3. **7:8.** To which letter does Paul refer in this verse? Though he wrote it with great anxiety, what was he hoping to accomplish?
4. **7:10.** What is the contrast between "godly grief" and "worldly grief"? Who in the Gospels exemplifies each type?

For application

1. **7:1.** What do you understand "the fear of God" to mean? (Hint: Reflect on Is 6:1–7 or Prov 2:1–10.) How do you fear God? What does it mean to "make holiness perfect" in that kind of fear?
2. **7:6.** How would you recognize when someone is spiritually downcast? Is this condition the same as psychological depression, or are the two conditions different? How would you encourage someone who is spiritually downcast?
3. **7:10.** Refer to the note for this verse. What experiences have you had of the two types of grief? How would you describe the difference in your own experience?
4. **7:11–12.** What is your customary response to being corrected? Would you say that your response is like what Paul describes in these verses? What spiritual correction have you received, and how did you cooperate with or resist it?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:1–9:15.** What does this central section of the letter deal with? What was the practical and the symbolic meaning of the donation?
2. **8:3.** What is almsgiving? For what do both the OT and NT prescribe it? What does the Church do with the standard that Paul erects for almsgiving? What does the fifth precept of the Church state?
3. **8:15.** Why did the Exodus generation of Israel not need to store or hoard manna? What attitude would such behavior have displayed? In what way is Paul urging believers to imitate the Lord? What is meant to happen to the blessing of prosperity?
4. **8:19.** Who were commissioned to deliver the charitable donations to Jerusalem? To what did the Jewish theologian Philo refer, using the same expression as Paul does?

For application

1. **8:1–5.** In what kinds of charitable giving do you engage? What kinds do you avoid? In either case, what seems to be your principal motivation?
2. **8:10–11.** How do you feel when someone promises to help you but never delivers on the promise? What do you think others might say of the promises of help that you make?
3. **8:14–15.** What resource-sharing arrangements does your parish or faith community have with other parishes or communities? Have these arrangements worked to meet the needs of the groups involved?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:7.** From what source must charitable gifts flow? What are the OT references for this idea? What do reluctant givers show themselves to be?
2. **9:10.** According to the allusion to Is 55:10, what is an example of God's blessing? Of what are these natural blessings an image?
3. **9:15.** What does the "inexpressible gift" refer to here?

For application

1. **9:1–5.** If you have ever had the job of collecting a pledge or a debt, what approaches have you used to motivate others to pay the money they owe? When you make a pledge or incur a debt, what motivates you to pay it?
2. **9:6.** Though Paul is speaking of the need for generosity (the "sowing"), is he implying that one should be generous simply in order to get something back (the "reaping")? From a spiritual perspective, what kinds of "reaping" can the generous person expect?
3. **9:10.** How does generosity increase resources for even more generosity? In your experience, does giving what you have mean that you have less or that somehow you have more?
4. **9:11–15.** In what ways can generosity be an expression of thanksgiving to God?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:1–13:14.** How does Paul spend the final chapters of this letter? Who is his audience in this section? What does this shift of focus account for, then?
2. **10:8.** What kind of mission does Paul's apostleship represent? Why does he defend it so vigorously?
3. **10:13–18.** Of what does Paul accuse the false teachers? What role does Paul claim for himself, and why?
4. **10:17.** In the passage Paul quotes, what does Jeremiah warn Israel not to do? What should they do, rather?

For application

1. **10:7.** Do you have any areas of disagreement with Church authorities? If you regard yourself as a Christian in good standing, how willing are you to grant that those with whom you disagree are Christians in good standing as well?
2. **10:8.** Why does authority exist in the Church? What kind of authority does the Church have?
3. **10:10–11.** How often do you pray explicitly for your bishop and for others in authority in the Church?
4. **10:18.** How would you recognize when it is truly the Lord who is commending someone who does ministry in your parish or community?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:2.** As “father” of the Corinthians, what is Paul in charge of in their regard? For what is he preserving them?
2. **Word Study: Unskilled (11:6).** What are some of the meanings that the Greek word *idiōtēs* has in the NT? How does Paul use the word in 2 Cor in reference to himself? What comparison is Paul making between himself and Moses? Why would Moses consider himself an unlearned man?
3. **11:7–11.** Why would the Corinthians have felt insulted to have Paul refuse financial assistance from them? What reasons does Paul give for his decision not to seek it? In the end, what point is Paul making about his tireless labor among them?
4. **11:24.** To what does “forty lashes less one” refer? Why would the Jews not give the 40 lashes that the Torah prescribed? How many times had Paul endured this punishment?

For application

1. **11:3–4.** If a noted or popular preacher says something that sounds a little different from what you have been taught, how do you determine whether to believe it or not? How can you protect yourself from being “taken in” by plausible opinions of theologians who disagree in some respect with the Church’s teaching?
2. **11:13–15.** How often have you heard dissenters from authentic Catholic teaching present themselves as “servants of righteousness”? In Paul’s opinion, what kind of people are they really?
3. **11:21b–29.** Of what use are a professional’s credentials? If you were in a position of authority and faced an opponent with similar credentials to yours, which ones would you emphasize, and why?
4. **11:30.** What is the risk of emphasizing “credentials” that show your weakness? What is the potential benefit?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:2.** With what period of Paul’s life does this time reference correspond? What were the three levels of heaven in which Jewish tradition believed? What would Paul have glimpsed in the third heaven?
2. **Word Study: Paradise (12:3).** What is the Persian origin of the word *paradise*? Where in the OT does it appear? How does the NT sharpen this expectation?
3. **12:7.** What two interpretations might be given to Paul’s reference to a “thorn” in the flesh? Either way, why would God have allowed the suffering? How are Paul’s sufferings like those of another biblical character?
4. **12:9.** Why was Paul’s petition for relief denied? What does his experience show us about ourselves?

For application

1. **12:1–4.** If you receive special graces from God, such as visions, whom should you tell about them? What spiritual dangers lurk in telling your friends or acquaintances? What benefit do you enjoy by confiding in a prudent spiritual director?
2. **12:5–6.** If special spiritual experiences can be a danger as well as a blessing, what should you think of yourself if you never seem to have any special graces?
3. **12:7–10.** Why do you think God sometimes says No to your requests? How content are you to accept the fact that Christ’s grace—and not the answer you want—is enough for you?

Chapter 13*For understanding*

1. **13:1.** How did Mosaic legislation seek to assure a fair criminal process? How does Paul apply this principle in a New Covenant context?
2. **13:4.** How does Paul use the Cross of Christ in referring to his own weakness? What point is he making?
3. **13:14.** Of what is this verse one of the earliest and clearest expressions in the NT? How has it been used in the Church?

For application

1. **13:3–4.** Meditate on the meaning of the crucifix. How much of a challenge to you is the crucifixion of the almighty Son of God? How does his weakness mean spiritual power for you?
2. **13:5.** How well—that is to say, how honestly and how rigorously—do you discipline yourself in your faith and your practice of it? Would your critics or your enemies agree with you?
3. **13:12.** Aside from the liturgical application of this verse, how welcoming to strangers and new members is your parish or community? How often do you associate with other parishioners outside of Mass?