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Study Questions for the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*

The Letter of St. Paul to the Romans

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THE LETTER OF SAINT PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:5.** What is the significance of the expression “the obedience of faith” in Romans? What kind of act is that obedience, and what is its role in our relationship with Christ?
2. **1:17.** What two related meanings does the theme of God’s righteousness have in Romans? What does the expression “through faith for faith” mean? Why does Paul quote Habakkuk 2:4?
3. **1:18.** What is “the wrath of God”? How is it related to God’s love?
4. **1:24.** What is one severe form of God’s judgment in history on recalcitrant sinners? How is allowing them to persist in their sin an expression of that judgment?

For application

1. **1:7.** What does this verse say about your vocation in life? How are you fulfilling that vocation in your present state? What prospects for growth in that vocation are there in your immediate future?
2. **1:11–12.** What spiritual gifts do you have that you can share with others? Within your Christian environment, how do you share these gifts with other Christians, and how do you receive encouragement from the gifts of others?
3. **1:16.** How has the gospel been a power for salvation in your life? How willing are you to let it be known that you are a practicing Catholic? Do you take pride in the gospel?
4. **1:26–32.** How have the attitudes of those who are militantly opposed to basic, natural (not to mention Christian) morality affected your own moral outlook? How carefully do you examine the influence of the media or the opinions of friends or relatives on your moral attitudes?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:1–3:20.** What stylistic approach does Paul take in this section? With whom is Paul debating here? Who else uses this approach?
2. **Word Study: Justified (2:13).** What does the word mean in a legal context? What theological significance does Paul attach to the term when God justifies? What two things does God do when he justifies? For Paul, what effect does the justifying decree of God have on us?
3. **2:14.** What does the Greek expression “by nature” mean if the verse is rendered “the Gentiles|.|.do by nature” (as in the translation), and what does Paul then presume? What can the expression mean if the verse is rendered “the Gentiles by nature do not have the law”, and how does that understanding compare with v. 27?
4. **2:29.** What does physical circumcision signify for the Israelite? What deeper need does the Torah itself insist upon? What does Paul say God accomplishes through Baptism? Therefore, what does Paul imply about the need for a literal procedure?

For application

1. **2:6–11.** By what standard does Paul say you will be judged at the end of your life? What does it mean for someone to “obey wickedness” (v. 8)? If God shows no partiality, how strict do you think his judgment will be in your case?
2. **2:13.** Review the word study on this verse. Now that you have been justified through Baptism and have heard the faith proclaimed, what are some of the concrete ways you live out your Baptism? To paraphrase Paul, what does it mean to be a “hearer of Baptism” as opposed to a “doer” of it?
3. **2:17–21.** How would you apply these verses to your Catholic Christian identity? If someone accused you of being a hypocrite, what evidence would there be to sustain or refute the charge?
4. **2:28–29.** Based on these verses, what is a *real* Catholic?

Chapter 3*For understanding*

1. **3:10–18.** What does the chain of citations from Psalms suggest about the distinction between the righteous and the wicked? What is Paul’s point? What is he saying about sin in the members of the body?
2. **3:20.** To what does the expression “works of the law” refer? Because the Torah defines what is good and evil, what does it act as?
3. **3:23.** By saying that “all have sinned”, what does Paul mean? What exceptions clearly exist to the “all” in this passage?
4. **3:28.** How does faith lead to justification? What does the Council of Trent teach about the ability of man to earn salvation by good works?

For application

1. **3:8.** What examples from recent history can you think of that illustrate how people justify doing (an apparently lesser) evil so that (an apparently greater) good might come of it? What is morally (and logically) wrong with doing that? Have you ever tried to justify wrong behavior because something good resulted from it?
2. **3:20–22.** How would you answer someone who said that Christianity is not necessary because there are many non-Christians (including atheists) who do more good than some Christians?
3. **3:19–25a.** If what Paul says is true, what is the point of going to Mass on Sundays, obeying the Lenten fast laws, and fulfilling other Church precepts? Of what are these things an expression?
4. **3:27.** If Christians cannot boast about their works, can they then boast about how much faith they have? What is Paul saying they can boast about?

Chapter 4*For understanding*

1. **4:3.** What is Paul preparing to demonstrate in 4:9–10 about the significance of Genesis 15 in the narrative sequence of the Abraham story? What does that sequence show? What is Paul trying to debunk?
2. **4:7–8.** Read Gen 15:6 and Ps 32:1–2. What exegetical technique is Paul using

here? What is Paul trying to show by using this technique?

3. **4:18–24.** What is the parallel Paul is setting forth in these verses? What common point about faith is being made?
4. **4:25.** What is Paul saying about the Resurrection of Jesus? How does this mystery apply to the Christian?

For application

1. **4:3–5.** When you pray for God to grant a request, do you expect an answer? Why do you think God should grant your request? (Conversely, why might you think that he will not?) What, in other words, is your level of trust in God's love for you?
2. **4:9–12.** A radio preacher once declared that God never listens to the prayers of a non-Christian. How do you think that attitude squares with these verses? How comfortable would you feel if you learned that God answers the prayers of certain Jews, Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists? How might that discovery challenge or confirm your faith?
3. **4:15.** What is Paul saying here? Does he mean there is no such thing as sin or punishment for sin? (Review Rom 1:18–32.)
4. **4:20.** How does your trust in God fare in the face of personal calamity? What are the promises that God has made that supersede all such calamities?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:10.** How can salvation be described in terms of past, present, and future? What other Scripture passages back up this understanding?
2. **5:12.** How are we to understand the introduction of death into the world through Adam? What kind of death was this? Why are all men said to sin if only Adam did? What did the Council of Trent state as the Catholic position on this verse? How does the condition of spiritual death spread?
3. **Word Study: Type (5:14).** What does the Greek word *typos* mean? What does it mean in general? What are some of the ways the New Testament uses the term? How does Paul use "types"?
4. **5:20.** How did the Torah aggravate the problem of sin in Israel? What, then, was the purpose of the Law? How, according to St. Augustine, is that related to grace?

For application

1. **5:1–5.** Read the note (on the theological virtues) for these verses. In which of the three are you the weakest? How does this weakness show itself? What have you done to overcome the weakness you see?
2. **5:3–5.** Have these verses proven to be true in your life? How do suffering and endurance produce character?
3. **5:6–8.** How good do you have to be to earn God's love for you? Looking at the facts of your life, how has God intervened in a way that demonstrates that he loves you in spite of yourself?
4. **5:20–21.** Read the note for v. 20. If the boundaries of wrongdoing increase because of, say, any religious group's moral statutes, what does grace do? If death is the

consequence of sin--and if you sin--what kind of life can you hope for, according to Paul? Why?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:1–23.** What potential misunderstanding does Paul want to address in this section? What does such logic betray?
2. **6:4.** What are the principal effects of Baptism? What is Paul alluding to when he describes this mystery?
3. **6:16.** What is the point Paul is making here? Who are the respective masters he is talking about? Where was the first master leading?
4. **6:23.** What wage and what gift are being described in this verse?

For application

1. **6:2.** How would you answer this question for yourself? How “dead” to sin do you think you are, in practical terms? How do you deal with the tension between the Christian call to holiness and any patterns of sinful behavior you detect in yourself?
2. **6:12–14.** How might your actions show that you are no longer under the dominion of sin? For example, if you dislike an acquaintance, how might you act so that your dislike does not control you? If you are afraid of a commitment, how might you act so that fear does not dominate your behavior? According to v. 14, what *should* be the dominant factor in your behavior?
3. **6:17.** If you were a musician, what would it mean to play a score, with all its notes and expression markings, *from the heart*? By comparison, what might it mean to “obey from the heart” a standard you have been taught? Does that obedience enslave or free you?
4. **6:20–23.** If the reward of obedience to God is holiness, you should be able to see some signs of it when you look back on your life. What indications do you see that sin has less of a hold on you now than it used to? What are your spiritual interests?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:5.** What does Paul mean by “living in the flesh”? For him, what does “the flesh” refer to? What does the expression “our members” refer to?
2. **7:7–25.** What is Paul defending in these verses? Of what is he accusing sin? How does he dramatize his accusation? What does the Christian perspective of grace do to the reality of sin?
3. **7:9.** When Paul says, “I died”, for what persons or groups might he be speaking?
4. **7:23.** What is the “law of sin” traditionally called? How does it manifest itself? What does the *Catechism* (CCC 405, 1426, 2520) have to say about the fact that it remains in the baptized believer?

For application

1. **7:4–6.** If you are dead to the law and therefore discharged from it, what prevents you from engaging in any sort of conduct you want? To whom do you belong?

2. **7:7–8.** In your experience, how does a command *not* to do something provoke a desire to do it anyway? What incidents can you recall where you did something because you were told not to? What were the results?
3. **7:15–19.** How has the truth of what Paul says in these verses shown itself in your own life? What would modern psychology say is the source of the conflict between intention and behavior here? What does Paul say is the source of the conflict? Which is more realistic?
4. **7:21–24.** How serious for you is the internal conflict Paul describes here? How greatly do you “delight in the law of God”? What concern do you feel when this delight is not enough to overcome the temptation to act wrongly? If the conflict does not cause concern in you, why not? If it does, what do you do about it?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:2.** What two meanings does the expression “the law of the Spirit” have? How often does Paul refer to the Spirit in this chapter? How did the prophet Ezekiel foresee this new law?
2. **8:14–25.** How do we become sharers in the life of the Son of God? How does this sharing take place? What are some of the parallels to the Exodus story in these verses?
3. **8:29.** What does Paul mean by using the word *predestined* in this verse? What should we believe and not believe about predestination?
4. **8:35.** According to Paul, what does not have the power to cut us off from Christ? What in his mind *can* cut us off? With what are the afflictions that Paul lists here commonly linked?

For application

1. **8:12–13.** What do you have to do to live according to the Spirit? How automatic do you think life in the Spirit is? What choices does Paul point to in the two “if-clauses” of v. 13?
2. **8:18.** What are “the sufferings of this present time”? Is Paul referring to individual sufferings or to those of the world at large? What do you believe about the worth of comparing them to the glory to be revealed?
3. **8:24–25.** What are some of your strengths and weaknesses with regard to the virtue of hope? On a practical level, how do you balance between the two deficiencies related to hope--on the one hand, presumption (a cocksure attitude that heaven is in your back pocket); and, on the other, despair (terror that you will never make it even with God’s grace)?
4. **8:28.** How do personal or social disasters work for the good of those who love God? What prevents them from being a setback for both faith and hope? How can you use suffering as an occasion to grow in love for God?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:7–13.** What is Paul trying to show in these verses? What does he show about the

- biological sons of both Abraham and Jacob? What point is he trying to make?
2. **9:14–18.** What does Paul deny about divine election in these verses? How does he use Exodus to make his points? In effect, then, what is Paul defending?
 3. **9:18.** How is the pattern of God's dealings with Israel and Pharaoh in Exodus repeated in Paul's day? What does "divine hardening" do--and not do?
 4. **9:25–29.** Why does Paul turn to the prophets Hosea and Isaiah in these verses? What does each prophet have to say about the restoration of the people?
 5. **9:33.** How are the two passages Paul cites from Isaiah linked? What is the image symbolic of, and what does it dramatize?

For application

1. **9:6–8.** What does the expression "God has no grandchildren" mean to you? How do you "inherit" the faith?
2. **9:13.** Read the note for this verse. How is it possible for God to love one person "less" than someone else? How confident are you of God's love for you? or of his love for the people you find unlovable? If God loves everybody equally, why do some people seem to enjoy personal contact with him more than others do?
3. **9:14–18.** What sort of stubbornness characterizes your relationship with God? What is the difference between being steadfast in faith and being just plain stubborn in the way you see and do things?
4. **9:30–32a.** How can you tell if someone (other than yourself) is devout out of routine or out of genuine faith? Why is it dangerous to make judgments of this sort?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:4.** What two meanings can be used of the Greek word translated *end*, referring to Christ as "the end" of the law? Which is more probable? Why?
2. **10:6–8.** In the passage Paul paraphrases from Deut 30:12–14, what does Moses contend regarding the responsibility of Israel? In the spirit of Moses, what does Paul insist on? Why cannot Israel plead ignorance of the gospel?
3. **10:14–17.** What is Paul stressing in these verses? In the passages excerpted from Isaiah, what does the prophet foresee? Why is Paul careful to say that not all in Israel have rejected Jesus as Messiah?
4. **10:20–21.** What is Paul trying to demonstrate from Scripture here? Using two sequential passages from Isaiah, what stark contrast is Paul drawing?

For application

1. **10:2.** What is "zeal for God"? What is the difference between zeal and fanaticism? How would you characterize your own zeal for God? What are some good examples among people you know of a properly directed zeal?
2. **10:9–10.** What does verbal--that is, audible and public--confession of Jesus as Lord do for salvation that mere faith in the heart might not do? Why confess Jesus verbally?
3. **10:14–15.** How would you answer someone who objected to Christian missionary outreaches to primitive tribes on the grounds that the Christian faith is alien to and destructive of their cultures and that their native religion is more appropriate to

them? How would you apply Mt 28:18–20 here?

4. **10:17.** How does Paul say we come to faith? How does this verse change the popular notion that “seeing is believing”?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Remnant (11:5).** To what does the biblical concept of a “remnant” refer? What are some examples of remnants in the OT? How do several prophets use the concept?
2. **11:17–24.** How does Paul picture the messianic people? What does the horticultural practice of grafting try to accomplish? In Paul’s mind, what does the grafting analogy show?
3. **Topical Essay: The Salvation of All Israel.** What does the expression “all Israel” mean in Rom 11:26? What reasons are given in support of this meaning? What is the subtle but significant difference between “Israel” and “the Jews”? How will all Israel be “saved”?
4. **11:28.** How can Israel be both enemy and beloved?

For application

1. **11:1–6.** What kinds of doubts or life circumstances have challenged your own faith? What effects have these doubts had on your faith? How is it that you have managed to retain any faith at all, given your doubts or circumstances?
2. **11:17–20.** From what religious roots does Christianity come? If you are not ethnically Jewish, what do those roots make you, as a believer in Christianity? With what kind of awe, then, should you regard Judaism? With what kind of awe should you regard the grace of God in you?
3. **11:28–29.** In the context of these verses, how would you answer someone who said that the people of Israel have been rejected? If someone is an enemy of God “as regards the gospel”, how can he be at the same time “beloved for the sake of their forefathers”?
4. **11:33–36.** In the context of these verses, how might you look upon some of the disasters that have befallen Christianity as potential blessings from the Holy Spirit? For example, how might the Holy Spirit use the secularization of modern American culture as a blessing for the Church rather than as a curse?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:1–2.** What are some of the ways that Paul contrasts the idolatrous worship described in 1:18–32 with the worship of believers? In summary, what is the main difference between pagan and Christian worship?
2. **12:6.** What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? What does the list of gifts in this chapter cover? To what does the faith of the one who prophesies most likely refer? What does the expression “the analogy of faith” mean?
3. **12:19.** What does God promise Moses in Deut 32:35? How does Paul interpret this promise? What must Christians recognize, and what is their duty toward enemies?

4. **12:20.** What does Prov 25:21–22 say about evil and revenge? What should be the motivation behind good works?

For application

1. **12:2.** In what ways do you “conform” to the standards of the social, economic, political, or ideological world you live in? Why does Paul advise against being so conformed? How do you allow yourself to be “transformed by the renewal of your mind”?
2. **12:3–8.** According to “the measure of faith” God has given you, what spiritual gifts do you bring to the Body of Christ? How do you use them? What are the fruits of their use in the Body?
3. **12:13.** When is the last time you had your pastor or another parishioner over to your home for dinner? How might you practice hospitality in your own parish community?
4. **12:14–21.** How do you treat those who have offended you? What does it mean to allow the Lord to take vengeance, rather than exacting it yourself? In your own circumstances, how do you overcome the evil you face?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:1.** How is the State part of God’s design for society? To what can the State oblige the obedience of Christians? What is the Christian responsibility if the State oversteps its boundaries? Why then must Christians pray for government leaders?
2. **13:4.** What is the *ius gladii* to which Paul refers? When are such extreme measures acceptable? What does Christian tradition maintain that governments have the right to do? Does modern Christianity forbid capital punishment?
3. **13:8.** What kind of debt is always outstanding and never paid off? How can we ever fulfill this law?
4. **13:14.** Since Christians are first clothed with Christ in Baptism, what is Paul here enjoining?

For application

1. **13:1–5.** What kinds of problems do you have with those who have authority over you, whether governmental, job-related, social, or religious? How do you resist, evade, or criticize authority? Why does Paul say one must be subordinate to authority out of respect for one’s own conscience?
2. **13:6–7.** How careful are you with payment of income taxes? What reasons does Paul give to support payment of taxes?
3. **13:8.** What is your level of personal financial debt? Even though we live in an age of easy credit, why should a Christian avoid remaining in debt? How does God want you to retire the debt you have? (If you do not know, how can you learn what his will is here?)
4. **13:12b–14.** What addictions do you have? What are you doing to overcome or remove them? Why does Paul advise against making any provision for the desires of the flesh? How do you “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:1.** Who are “the weak” in this verse, and what are some of their characteristics? Whom are they probably trying to imitate? What OT personages maintained the type of Diaspora diet that the weak are maintaining?
2. **14:3.** What does inflating differences of opinion cause to happen? To whom are both the weak and the strong answerable?
3. **14:11.** What was the text Paul quotes from Isaiah 45 used for in ancient Judaism? Why does Paul use it here?
4. **14:15.** What should the strong do for the weak? Why?

For application

1. **14:3.** How does this verse apply what Paul has already said in 12:9–13 and 13:8–10? In what areas besides food are you tempted to despise or judge the weaknesses of others? How would you counteract this temptation?
2. **14:7–8.** What ways do you have of living for yourself rather than the Lord? In terms of the way you are living, to whom does your life really belong?
3. **14:15.** How might some of your activities, pursuits, or hobbies be harmful to the faith of others around you? Why does Paul *not* take the position that others’ reaction to what you do is “just their problem”? What does the term *scandal* mean (CCC 2284)?
4. **14:22–23.** How important is it, according to these verses, to be convinced that what you are doing is right? How might it be sinful to perform good actions without faith to back them up?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:3.** What is the psalm quoted in this verse about? In portraying Jesus Christ in the terms of the psalm, what is Paul stressing? What should Jesus’ example inspire the strong to do?
2. **15:9–12.** What does the chain of OT verses Paul cites here depict? How are the passages linked? What do they confirm about Paul’s thought?
3. **15:16.** How does Paul view his missionary work? What is his sacrifice? What does the missionary prophecy of Is 66:18–20 have to do with Paul’s view of his own work?
4. **15:21.** Why does Paul cite Is 52:15 here? What effect was news of the suffering and death of the Messiah supposed to have?

For application

1. **15:1–3.** Does Paul here mean “put up with” (endure) others’ failings or carry the weak along to better things? How does the context support your view? According to v. 2, what is the motive?
2. **15:13.** How does Paul’s prayer for hope apply to what he has said about bearing with the failings of the weak? How might it apply to bearing with your own failings?
3. **15:17–19.** In what respect is it appropriate for you to be proud of what you have accomplished for God? Who has actually achieved the results of your work?
4. **15:30.** How often and how intensely do you pray for missionaries? What motives does Paul suggest for such prayer?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:1.** To what could the title of deaconess refer? What might deaconesses do? What did the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) teach about deaconesses?
2. **16:5.** Where did the earliest Christians meet for prayer and worship? How does this practice reflect that of Jews?
3. **16:18.** Who might be the troublemakers to whom Paul refers?
4. **16:20.** What does Paul desire the Roman Christians to understand? To which biblical prophecy is Paul alluding? How does Paul extend it?

For application

1. **16:16.** How appropriate is it to greet fellow parishioners with a form of greeting beyond a cursory handshake? How do you feel during the eucharistic liturgy about greeting others with “a sign of peace” (or, in Paul’s words, a “holy kiss”)--and how sincerely do you do it?
2. **16:17–19.** What is the difference between disagreement and dissension? What is your experience of either in your parish community? How do you remain guileless in the face of honest disagreement? How can you become wise about dissension and guileless in opposing it?
3. **16:25–27.** How has your faith strengthened your obedience to the gospel? How has it increased your willingness to share the gospel with others?