

Mother of God Community
Sunday Night Prayer Meeting
Feb. 17, 2008
Put on the Armor of God (Eph. 6: 10-18)
Lynn Cothern

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In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul describes God's plan of salvation, and in the last three, his vision for living out the practical realities of life in Christ. Now, at the end, he sounds a final call to action, a war-cry, to put on the armor of God.

He writes, ***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might (10). Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil (11).***

In the Old Testament, the Lord appears as an armed soldier. In Is 59, when there was no one to stand against evil, [the Lord] *put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak (Is 59:17).*

Isaiah continues, *"He will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those...who turn from transgression ...And this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart [from you]"*

This passage in Ephesians is a portrait of our Redeemer! Jesus Christ dons the armor and comes to save us!

At the same time, this is a portrait of **us** in Christ! In Galatians it says, *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (2:20)*. We are to "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16), to "put on Christ," to be "in Christ."

So, if Christ is wearing the armor, and we are to be in Him, then the armor we wear is Christ!

And we're meant to live in **his** strength—the mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead. So cry out to him like the psalmist, *O Lord, you are my strength!*

So let us put on Christ...

For we are not contending against flesh and blood but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (12)

These powers of darkness are malevolent. In Hebrew, Satan means "adversary"; in Greek *diabolos* is "slanderer." Jesus Christ has won the victory, but the enemy has not admitted defeat.

St. Ambrose wrote, "Like a king bent on persecution, sending orders to persecute to his many agents, and establishing different persecutors in each city or province, the

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devil directs his many servants in the work of persecution, whether in public or in the souls of individuals" (Breviary III, 1309). **[ABORTION EXAMPLE at end]**

They hate it when we pursue God. Leo the Great wrote, "[the devils'] are tortured by our being justified, because they have fallen from those good things to which we, God helping us, are advancing. If, therefore, we are raised, they are prostrated: if we are strengthened, they are weakened. Our cures are their blows, because they are wounded by our wounds' cure" (Leo the Great, Sermon 39, On Lent, I). That is, Christ.

[RETREAT—nightmares, sickness, confusion]

The enemy is tactical: The enemy's wiles are twofold: to intimidate and to insinuate, to use force and fraud. The enemy "hooks" our vulnerable points--our wounds, sins, false beliefs, etc. **[EXAMPLE]**

St. Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* says that "it is proper to the [enemy] to bite, sadden, and place obstacles, disquieting with false reasons, so that the person may not go forward." Satan throws up obstacles to deter, discourage, and divide—to separate the Christian from God. **[EXAMPLES: HEADACHE, "SADDENING," TALK TO SOMEONE]**

Therefore, put on the whole armor of God—that is, put on Christ—that you may be able to withstand the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore,—he says it **four** times!—with the belt of truth around your waist, etc.

So we have to stand strong and resist! So that we would attain *to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of doctrine, cunning, and deceitful wiles* (Eph 4:14).

So this is about perseverance—an upright, attentive, vigilant posture. And this evil day—this battle—will last until Christ comes back. I had two words from the retreat: RESIST and PERSIST. Resist the enemy! Even when you feel sick, tired, emotional, confused, or just want a day off. And persist in prayer!

So stir up your ardor, your zeal: *The Lord goes forth like a hero, like a warrior he stirs up his ardor* (Is. 42:10+).

Catherine of Siena wrote, "Those who are not thirsty will never persevere in their journey. Either weariness or pleasure will make them stop" (*Fulfillment of All Desire*, 193).

And finally, Put on the whole armor of God (11).

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The pieces of armor are spiritual realities, the spiritual reality of Christ, which we are to wear like a armor of light. Christ took on the weakness of our lowly human nature and He offers us—**NOW**—a share in His divine nature so that we can participate in his divine plan.

gird your loins with truth,

As Christ **IS** the truth, we are to **be** and **do** the truth. John 8:31 it says, *you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* This is the belt soldiers used to tie their clothes around their waist so they could fight unimpeded. We take on Christ's truth; we become Christ. We become single-hearted and truly authentic human persons because we are not encumbered by our stuff!

put on the breastplate of righteousness,

As Christ is righteousness, we have his righteousness as the breastplate that covers our heart. Paul writes in Eph 4, *Put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness* (Eph 4:24). Our spiritual protection is the righteousness of Christ. In 2 Cor 6, Paul says *the weapons of righteousness are purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God* (6-7). To be holy as Jesus is holy.

Put on your feet the equipment of the gospel of peace;

Isaiah says, *How beautiful are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who published peace* (Is 52:7). Imagine Jesus' ministry, constantly on the move, his feet shod with *the gospel of peace*. Is it not Jesus you want to run after?

Paul says in Colossians, *So as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk with him!* (Col 4:6). The Roman sandals were made with strong soles to stand firm and ankle laces to move quickly. We stand firmly on Christ the cornerstone, the foundation, but are ready to run the race with him to bring his people the gospel of peace.

besides all these (16) take the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.

God has always been thought of as a shield: Proverbs 30:5: *God is a shield to those who take refuge in him.* Psalm 18: *I love you, O Lord, my strength...[you] are **my shield**.* Psalm 91:4: *his faithfulness is a **shield***

Jesus Christ is our shield. Galatians 3: 25-27: *for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* He shields us from the flaming darts of the enemy. **[EXAMPLE]**

And take the helmet of salvation (17)

Christ wears the helmet of salvation: the assurance of what we have already received—God's forgiveness and love—and the hope of eternal life. *We put on for a helmet the hope of salvation,* as it says in 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

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We are to put on the mind of Christ, to *be renewed in the spirit of [our] minds*. The enemy is after our minds in order to steal our salvation! So *put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness* (Eph 4:23-24).

and finally, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Christ is the Word of God! In Revelation 1, John sees the Son of Man, *his voice like the sound of many waters...and from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword.*

This is the only part of the armor used to attack and to defend. *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12).

Jesus tells us *if you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples* (Jn 8:31). It is the sword of the Spirit that pricks our consciences, cuts through our defenses, and wakes us up spiritually.

Origen wrote, "...which battlefield to choose? ... limit your quest to yourself alone. In you lies the combat you are going to engage, within yourself the structure of evil and sin to pull down; your enemy emerges from the depths of your heart..." (Origen, Homilies on Joshua, no. 5 (SC 71). **[EXAMPLE: DAUGHTER OF GOD]**

It's the word of God that will bring darkness and distortions to light and replace them with the truth.

Finally, what brings all this together? Prayer!!!

18 Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,...

Jesus Christ prays and he wants us to pray! Prayer should pervade our lives! Paul uses the word "all" four times—at **all** times, **all** kinds of prayer, with **all** perseverance, for **all** the saints.

God is calling some of you to take up the Liturgy of the Hours. God is calling some of you to get up in the morning and pray. God is calling each of us to His school of prayer.

Saint Silouan (orthodox monk, d. 1938) said, "The Lord will give prayer to anyone who is obedient and restrained in everything.... Unceasing prayer proceeds from love, but it is lost by passing judgment, empty words and intemperateness." So let us pray for the grace to grow in virtue, that we would receive the gift of unceasing prayer.

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In conclusion...

As we surrender to God, he is our strength and our defense. As we are defenseless before Him, He clothes us in the light of Christ. *So let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light* (Romans 13:12).

Pray for Marian excellences of spirit. The soldiers in Mary's army are clothed in humility, the primary weapon against the enemy, the very thing that makes the enemy flee.

St. Louis de Montfort wrote in *True Devotion*, para. 47-48: Toward the end of the world... the Almighty God and his holy Mother are to raise up great saints who will surpass in holiness most other saints as much as the cedars of Lebanon tower over little shrubs...these great souls filled with grace and zeal will be chosen to oppose the enemies of God who are raging on all sides. They will be exceptionally devoted to the Blessed Virgin. ...they will fight with one hand and build with another. With one hand they will give battle....and with the other hand they will build...the mystical city of God (the Virgin Mary).

Ask Mary to be your spiritual mother.

And finally, pray for the grace of abiding joy. *I shall offer within his tent a sacrifice of joy* (Ps 27). The devil can't stand joy. Story about the exorcist whose helpers began laughing because they couldn't remember the words to a song to Mary. The devil can't stand Mary, and he can't stand joy.

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**Human Life International newsletter, Jan. 25, 2008
Fr. Tom Euteneuer**

... the Planned Parenthood in Schenectady, NY also staged its own drama of the absurd. They dedicated a new 18,000 square foot killing center that day and had **three members of the abortion "clergy" come out and "bless" it!** What I have always said about abortion as a demonic religion was on graphic display in NY as we were marching for life in DC. Two "ministers" came to do the blessing...[one] used the occasion **to proudly announce a new doctrine to the three dozen devotees of sacred abortion: the right to privacy is endowed by God,** he said. Now, we cannot even find the "right to privacy" in the US Constitution and yet this fellow makes a new religious right out of whole cloth. Don't ask the demonic religion for a good grounding in history or logic. **The other abortion clergyman was a rabbi who blew the shofar as a way to show support for reproductive rights...**

The most absurd aspect of the blessing ceremony, however, was when [another reverend] led **the congregation outside to lay hands on the brick and mortar and to declare that the killing center was "sacred ground."** Ugh. The hierarchy (Planned Parenthood), the acolytes (clinic workers), the congregation (supporters) and the ministers were all at the abortion temple that day worshipping the god of abortion. And the demons were so pleased.

St. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6 that our battle is not against flesh and blood. It is against the principalities and powers of this world of darkness. The darkness is spreading, but the Light of Christ shines forth in all those wonderful kids and their parents that showed the world that life will win in the end.

"The light shines on in darkness, a darkness that did not overcome it." (Jn 1:5)