**Loyola Fall 2022 Bible Study † Paul’s Epistle to the Romans**

**Our overall guiding study question for Romans**: Radical humility. Critical self-analysis. Unconditional love. Restraint from judgement. So much of what we think of & feel towards others depends on how we view ourselves & what we feel entitled to. How can we remain vigilant about our call to social justice without sacrificing our call to charity?

**Sixth study session (Nov. 29): Romans 15:1-16:23**

**Last week I saw a thread online of people responding to the question “If you could tell people to read three books from the Christian Bible, which three would you pick?” Several folks included Romans on their list. That’s not surprising, given how foundational Paul’s discourse on salvation has remained throughout Christian history.**

**I think it *would* have surprised several folks, though, when we first began reading Romans in September. Tonight, we can gauge how far we’ve come in understanding Paul’s larger message.**

**(We can also share our own lists of three books, too. Mine would be Genesis [necessary for Christian cosmology]; Psalms [for solace]; and Luke/Acts [considered as one text about Jesus and the apostles living, teaching, and dying]. Plus Matthew, I Corinthians, and Philippians because in reality we can tell people to read more than three).**

Discussion Questions

1. Romans 15:1-6 *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves;****2****let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him.****3****For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me.”****4****For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.****5****May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,****6****that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Perfect exhortation. No notes. 15:1 on its own should be enough moral guidance to get us through life as individuals. It should also be a no-brainer public ethic for society as a whole, but that’s still a work in progress.

These verses actually weave together several of Paul’s threads in Romans. Examining them in order (verses 1-2; 3; 4; and 5-6) what earlier intentions and statements from Paul do they summarize?

1. We’ve discussed a couple of messages and lessons from Romans that we can apply to our lives as members of the Loyola community, especially in light of our upcoming changes in leadership next summer. What messages and lessons have you found in this book, though, to apply to our personal lives, whether long-term or day-to-day?

If it’s hard to think of many beyond Paul’s basic calls for humility, acceptance, and general good-neighborliness, let’s ask why. What are the biggest differences between ourselves and Paul’s original audience? We’ve learned that Paul’s message of hope in Christian salvation emerges from the context of continued tension between Jewish and gentile Christians. We haven’t discussed it before, but that necessarily means he was speaking to people who were already religious (and monotheistic), no matter whether they got along with each other or not.

We live in a much more secular society, though, and often need to explain or defend the Gospel message of radical love to agnostics and atheists. Even more challenging at times: we need to defend the original Gospel message against corrupted or fully fictitious interpretations created to support prejudices. How does Romans still speak to us and prepare us for those conversations?

1. What lessons about **humility**, **self-analysis,** and **judgment** do we find in this week’s readings?

**Notes**