

St. Jerome Adult Bible Study

Hebrews – Lesson 6

References and Notes

Hebrews 12:1-2

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us ²while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God.

CCC 165: It is then we must turn to the *witnesses of faith*: to Abraham, who "in hope... believed against hope"; to the Virgin Mary, who, in "her pilgrimage of faith", walked into the "night of faith" in sharing the darkness of her son's suffering and death; and to so many others: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

CCC 2683: The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings, and their prayer today. They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. When they entered into the joy of their Master, they were "put in charge of many things." Their intercession is their most exalted service to God's plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: ²⁴Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. ²⁵Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. ²⁶Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. ²⁷No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Philippians 3:12-14: ¹²It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ (Jesus). ¹³Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 2:2-7: ¹So you, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well. ³Bear your share of hardship along with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴To satisfy the one who recruited him, a soldier does not become entangled in the business affairs of life. ⁵Similarly, an athlete cannot receive the winner's crown except by competing according to the rules. ⁶The hardworking farmer ought to have the first share of the crop. ⁷Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

James 1:12: ¹²Blessed is the man who perseveres in temptation, for when he has been proved he will receive the crown of life that he promised to those who love him.

Hebrews 12:3-4

³Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.

In her Magisterial teaching of the faith and in the witness of her saints, the Church has never forgotten that "sinners were the authors and the ministers of all the sufferings that the divine Redeemer endured." Taking into account the fact that our sins affect Christ himself, the Church does not hesitate to impute to Christians the gravest responsibility for the torments inflicted upon Jesus, a responsibility with which they have all too often burdened the Jews alone:

We must regard as guilty all those who continue to relapse into their sins. Since our sins made the Lord Christ suffer the torment of the cross, those who plunge themselves into disorders and crimes crucify the Son of God anew in their hearts (for he is in them) and hold him up to contempt. And it can be seen that our crime in this case is greater in us than in the Jews. As for them, according to the witness of the Apostle, "None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." We, however, profess to know him. And when we deny him by our deeds, we in some way seem to lay violent hands on him.

Nor did demons crucify him; it is you who have crucified him and crucify him still, when you delight in your vices and sins.

Hebrews 12:9-11

⁹Besides this, we have had our earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not (then) submit all the more to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰They disciplined us for a short time as seemed right to them, but he does so for our benefit, in order that we may share his holiness. ¹¹At the time, all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it.

Holman Bible Dictionary: Discipline comes from a Latin word "disco" which means to learn or get to know, a direct kind of acquaintance with something or someone. Discipline refers to the process by which one learns a way of life. A disciple was like an apprentice who was learning a trade or craft from a master. Such learning required a relationship between the master who knew the way of life (discipline) and a learner (a disciple). Within this relationship, the master led a learner through a process (the discipline) until the learner could imitate or live like the master.

Deuteronomy 4:9: ⁹"However, take care and be earnestly on your guard not to forget the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live, but teach them to your children and to your children's children.

Hebrews 12:16-17

¹⁶that no one be an immoral or profane person like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

Genesis 25:24-34: ²⁴When the time of her delivery came, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵The first to emerge was reddish, and his whole body was like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. ²⁶His brother came out next, gripping Esau's heel; so they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born. ²⁷As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man who lived in the open; whereas Jacob was a simple man, who kept to his tents. ²⁸Isaac preferred Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah preferred Jacob. ²⁹Once, when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the open, famished. ³⁰He said to Jacob, "Let me gulp down some of that red stuff; I'm starving." (That is why he was called Edom.) ³¹But Jacob replied, "First give me your birthright in exchange for it." ³²"Look," said Esau, "I'm on the point of dying. What good will any birthright do me?" ³³But Jacob insisted, "Swear to me first!" So he sold Jacob his birthright under oath. ³⁴Jacob then gave him some bread and the lentil stew; and Esau ate, drank, got up, and went his way. Esau cared little for his birthright.

Hebrews 12:18-21

¹⁸You have not approached that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm ¹⁹and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them, ²⁰for they could not bear to hear the command: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." ²¹Indeed, so fearful was the spectacle that Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling."

Exodus 19:12-25: ¹²Set limits for the people all around the mountain, and tell them: Take care not to go up the mountain, or even to touch its base. If anyone touches the mountain, he must be put to death. ¹³No hand shall touch him; he must be stoned to death or killed with arrows. Such a one, man or beast, must not be allowed to live. Only when the ram's horn resounds may they go up to the mountain." ¹⁴Then Moses came down from the mountain to the people and had them sanctify themselves and wash their garments. ¹⁵He warned them, "Be ready for the third day. Have no intercourse with any woman." ¹⁶On the morning of the third day there were peals of thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled. ¹⁷But Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stationed themselves at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸Mount Sinai was all wrapped in smoke, for the Lord came down upon it in fire. The smoke rose from it as though from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. ¹⁹The trumpet blast grew louder and louder, while Moses was speaking and God answering him with thunder. ²⁰When the Lord came down to the top of Mount Sinai, he summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up to him. ²¹Then the Lord told Moses, "Go down and warn the people not to break through toward the Lord in order to see him; otherwise many of them will be struck down. ²²The priests, too, who approach the Lord must sanctify themselves; else he will vent his anger upon them." ²³Moses said to the Lord, "The people cannot go up to Mount Sinai, for you yourself warned us to set limits around the mountain to make it sacred." ²⁴The Lord repeated, "Go down now! Then come up again along with Aaron. But the priests and the people must not break through to come up to the Lord; else he will vent his anger upon them." ²⁵So Moses went down to the people and told them this.

Hebrews 13:3

³Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment, and of the ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the body.

CCC 2447: The *works of mercy* are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God:

He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise. But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you. If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?

Hebrews 13:10

¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

CCC 1182: The *altar* of the New Covenant is the Lord's Cross, from which the sacraments of the Paschal mystery flow. On the altar, which is the center of the church, the sacrifice of the Cross is made present under sacramental signs. The altar is also the table of the Lord, to which the People of God are invited. In certain Eastern liturgies, the altar is also the symbol of the tomb (Christ truly died and is truly risen).

Hebrews 13:11-13

¹¹The bodies of the animals whose blood the high priest brings into the sanctuary as a sin offering are burned outside the camp. ¹²Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. ¹³Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he bore.

Numbers 19:2-7: ²“This is the regulation which the law of the Lord prescribes. Tell the Israelites to procure for you a red heifer that is free from every blemish and defect and on which no yoke has ever been laid. ³This is to be given to Eleazar the priest, to be led outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence. ⁴Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the meeting tent. ⁵Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight, with its hide and flesh, its blood and offal; ⁶and the priest shall take some cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet yarn and throw them into the fire in which the heifer is being burned. ⁷The priest shall then wash his garments and bathe his body in water. He remains unclean until the evening, and only afterward may he return to the camp.

Footnote: since the tabernacle faced the east, the killing of the heifer took place east of the camp; in later times it was done on the Mount of Olives, east of the Temple.

Leviticus 16

¹After the death of Aaron’s two sons, who died when they approached the Lord’s presence, the Lord spoke to Moses ²and said to him, “Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he pleases into the sanctuary, inside the veil, in front of the propitiatory on the ark; otherwise, when I reveal myself in a cloud above the propitiatory, he will die. ³Only in this way may Aaron enter the sanctuary. He shall bring a young bullock for a sin offering and a ram for a holocaust. ⁴He shall wear the sacred linen tunic, with the linen drawers next his flesh, gird himself with the linen sash and put on the linen miter. But since these vestments are sacred, he shall not put them on until he has first bathed his body in water. ⁵From the Israelite community he shall receive two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a holocaust. ⁶“Aaron shall bring in the bullock, his sin offering to atone for himself and for his household. ⁷Taking the two male goats and setting them before the Lord at the entrance of the meeting tent, ⁸he shall cast lots to determine which one is for the Lord and which for Azazel. ⁹The goat that is determined by lot for the Lord, Aaron shall bring in and offer up as a sin offering. ¹⁰But the goat determined by lot for Azazel he shall set alive before the Lord, so that with it he may make atonement by sending it off to Azazel in the desert. ¹¹“Thus shall Aaron offer up the bullock, his sin offering, to atone for himself and for his family. When he has slaughtered it, ¹²he shall take a censer full of glowing embers from the altar before the Lord, as well as a double handful of finely ground fragrant incense, and bringing them inside the veil, ¹³there before the Lord he shall put incense on the fire, so that a cloud of incense may cover the propitiatory over the commandments; else he will die. ¹⁴Taking some of the bullock’s blood, he shall sprinkle it with his finger on the fore part of the propitiatory and likewise sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times in front of the propitiatory. ¹⁵“Then he shall slaughter the people’s sin-offering goat, and bringing its blood inside the veil, he shall do with it as he did with the bullock’s blood, sprinkling it on the propitiatory and before it. ¹⁶Thus he shall make atonement for the sanctuary because of all the sinful defilements and faults of the Israelites. He shall do the same for the meeting tent, which is set up among them in the midst of their uncleanness. ¹⁷No one else may be in the meeting tent from the time he enters the sanctuary to make atonement until he departs. When he has made atonement for himself and his household, as well as for the whole Israelite community, ¹⁸he shall come out to the altar before the Lord and make atonement for it also. Taking some of the bullock’s and the goat’s blood, he shall put it on the horns around the altar, ¹⁹and with his finger sprinkle some of the blood on it seven times. Thus he shall render it clean and holy, purged of the defilements of the Israelites. ²⁰“When he has completed the atonement rite for the sanctuary, the meeting tent and the altar, Aaron shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹Laying both hands on its head, he shall confess over it all the sinful faults

and transgressions of the Israelites, and so put them on the goat's head. He shall then have it led into the desert by an attendant. ²²Since the goat is to carry off their iniquities to an isolated region, it must be sent away into the desert. ²³“After Aaron has again gone into the meeting tent, he shall strip off and leave in the sanctuary the linen vestments he had put on when he entered there. ²⁴After bathing his body with water in a sacred place, he shall put on his vestments, and then come out and offer his own and the people's holocaust, in atonement for himself and for the people, ²⁵and also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar. ²⁶“The man who has led away the goat for Azazel shall wash his garments and bathe his body in water; only then may he enter the camp. ²⁷The sin-offering bullock and goat whose blood was brought into the sanctuary to make atonement, shall be taken outside the camp, where their hides and flesh and offal shall be burned up in the fire. ²⁸The one who burns them shall wash his garments and bathe his body in water; only then may he enter the camp. ²⁹“This shall be an everlasting ordinance for you: on the tenth day of the seventh month every one of you, whether a native or a resident alien, shall mortify himself and shall do no work. ³⁰Since on this day atonement is made for you to make you clean, so that you may be cleansed of all your sins before the Lord, ³¹by everlasting ordinance it shall be a most solemn sabbath for you, on which you must mortify yourselves. ³²“This atonement is to be made by the priest who has been anointed and ordained to the priesthood in succession to his father. He shall wear the linen garments, the sacred vestments, ³³and make atonement for the sacred sanctuary, the meeting tent and the altar, as well as for the priests and all the people of the community. ³⁴This, then, shall be an everlasting ordinance for you: once a year atonement shall be made for all the sins of the Israelites.” Thus was it done, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Hebrews 13:20-21

²⁰May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, Jesus our Lord, ²¹furnish you with all that is good, that you may do his will. May he carry out in you what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever (and ever). Amen.

Footnote: These verses constitute one of the most beautiful blessings in the New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus is presupposed throughout Hebrews, since it is included in the author's frequently expressed idea of his exaltation, but this is the only place where it is explicitly mentioned.

CCC 632: The frequent New Testament affirmations that Jesus was "raised from the dead" presuppose that the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection. This was the first meaning given in the apostolic preaching to Christ's descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there.