



On Sundays and Solemnities, after the Responsorial Psalm, we always hear the proclamation of the Second Reading, which is taken from the New Testament books (other than the Gospels) and is generally continuous from one week to the next. While St. Paul is the most prolific of the New Testament writers, we also have readings from St. John, St. Peter, St. James, and others. Although the sentences in these readings are sometimes long and a little awkward (because they were originally written in Greek, not English), they are packed with great wisdom and directives for Christian living. As Edward Sri writes, “Though often selected independently of the First Reading and the Gospel, these New Testament writings reflect on the ministry of Jesus Christ and his saving work and the meaning it has for our lives. They also draw out the practical applications of our life in Christ and exhort us evermore to ‘put on Christ’ and turn away from sin” (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, p. 64).

How to Live in Christ Every Day

As we look through the books of the New Testament, we see how each writer was addressing a person or particular community with their own strengths and weaknesses. The writer knew his audience and, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, taught these people what God asks of us and how to live in Christ every day. These readings call us to faithfulness and generosity in loving one another. Sometimes we hear joyful words of truth: “Beloved, see what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are” (1 Jn 3:1). We also hear words of consolation: “We always pray for you” (2 Thes 1:11). At other times, we will hear exhortations to holiness, such as, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor 3:16) and “do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh” (Gal 5:13).

These writings are beneficial to us because St. Paul and the other writers were all helping early Christians understand how to live in an anti-Christian world (recall that Christianity was illegal in the Roman Empire during the first centuries of the Church). The writers provided answers to difficult questions, gave explanations for why we do certain things and not others, and exhorted the people to holiness and fidelity even in the midst of daily struggles and persecutions.

How to Live as a Christian in the World

A couple of very common questions today are: “How do I really live as a Christian in the world? How do I make what I do on Sunday last all through the week?” Thanks to these New Testament Readings, we have answers to these questions. Look through the readings for any Sunday, and what do you see? “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1); “For you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28); “For he is our peace” (Eph 2:14); “Seek what is above” (Col 3:1); “that you may not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb 12:3); “Be doers of the word and not hearers only” (Jas 1:19); “Compete well for the faith” (1 Tim 6:12); “Children, let us love...in deed and truth” (1 Jn 3:18); “He will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev 21:4); “Always be ready to give an explanation...for your hope” (1 Pet 3:15). Does it feel like we could keep going and going? We really could! At every Sunday Mass and on Solemnities, the Second Reading is packed with wisdom from the saints to help us become saints, too!