



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

1st Sunday of Christmas (C) – Colossians 3:12-17

Focus: *Wearing Your Baptism*

word of life

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” Colossians 3:12 (NRSV)

Read Colossians 3:12-17

The letter to the church in Colossae, a community in Asia Minor, begins with the salutation (Colossians 1:1-2) indicating its authorship (Paul and Timothy) and its audience (the faithful believers in Colossae). Although there is debate whether this letter was written by Paul or by someone in the Pauline tradition, the purpose of the letter is clear. After giving thanks for the community and their concern for him, the apostle writes a letter encouraging them to stand against the teachings of the world and grow in their life in Christ. The verses for today reflect this encouragement.

1. Describe a letter of encouragement your congregation received. How did it make you feel?
2. What word of encouragement would be helpful to your congregation?

The Christian life begins at baptism, and baptismal imagery washes over the reader in today’s reading. “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” (Colossians 3:12 NRSV) Just as the newly baptized in the early church were dressed in a new robe as they came out of the water, the writer is encouraging the baptized to put on the virtues of a faithful follower.

3. How does one “clothe oneself” with these virtues?
4. Is one of the virtues easier for you to do than another? Explain.

Note that the five attributes/virtues of faithful living are set in parallel contrast to attributes in the preceding verses. The Christian is admonished to “put to death” five earthly attributes: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (Colossians 3:5) and live out his/her calling as God’s holy ones.

It is also helpful to note that the five virtues the writer encourages the church in Colossae to “put on” are all attributes used to describe Jesus or God in other writings of Paul. The same Greek words listed here with the imperative “clothe yourselves” – compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience – are used in other writings with an indicative verb as characteristics of God or Jesus. In other words, the followers of Jesus are to strive to be like Jesus and live as Jesus lived.

5. Have someone look up in other epistles of Paul the following verses describing Jesus or God with these virtues: (Note: the word may be translated differently, but it is the same word in Greek)
compassion – 2 Corinthians 1:3, Romans 12:1 (the “mercies” of God)
kindness – Romans 2:4 (the riches of God’s “kindness”)
humility – Philippians 2:8 (Christ “humbled” himself)
meekness – 2 Corinthians 10:1 (the “meekness” and gentleness of Christ)
patience – Romans 2:4, Romans 9:22 (God’s patience; God has endured with much “patience”)

The virtues are all present in the overarching exhortation: “Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts....” (Colossians 3:14-15 NRSV) Peace is known in Christian unity as the faithful strive to live their baptism, putting away those things which separate from God and putting on the attributes of Jesus – virtues bestowed on us in our baptism.

word among us

“What are you going to wear?” You’ve been invited to a banquet. On the invitation are the words, “formal attire requested.” What to wear? Or you’ve been invited with a phone call to a friend’s house for dinner. The friend enjoys cooking elaborate meals using the family good china dishes. Or you are going to a new church for the first time and aren’t sure: “Should I wear a tie?” “Should I wear a dress?”

1. *What determines what you decide to wear? Does it matter what you wear?*

What are we to wear? The apostle in today’s reading from Colossians gives some “wardrobe advice.” The advice is good for all occasions; it is good counsel for both men and women, children or the aged. It is a wardrobe worn by Jesus; it was one given to us when we were joined to him in baptism. “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” (Colossians 3:12 NRSV)

2. *Identify and describe someone you know who clothes themselves with these characteristics.*

“What are you going to wear?” The answer to this question just may be found by asking another question, “What would Jesus wear?” Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience – all describe the wardrobe Jesus wore. Too often we experience “wardrobe malfunction.” We allow the evils of this world to dress us. We reveal fabric and patterns that are inappropriate and unbecoming. We don’t wear our faith very well.

We are reminded today that we as followers of Christ are God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved; and we are called to dress accordingly. It’s the uniform of the followers of the One who wore the garment of a servant and calls us to service in his name.

3. *What one characteristic do you wish would “fit” you better?*
4. *How might you practice wearing that attribute on a more regular basis?*

So listen to fashion advice from the letter to the Colossians. Reach into your closet, and choose to make a fashion statement! Clothe yourself with love; forgive as you have been forgiven. Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart. Be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the Good News of Christ in word and deed

It is a tradition in some churches to have a baptismal gown for the newly baptized. Infants are brought to the font wearing a pristine dress; adults sometimes wear a robe. This attire indicates that something special is happening when we baptize. Those baptized are claimed as chosen people of God, holy and beloved. They are wrapped up in the new robe – a robe sewn with the fabric of God’s grace and love. One size fits all; it’s just right for any occasion. The robe covers the dirt and stains of the world. It warms us when the cold winds of life blow. In word and in deed, clothe yourself in the robe of your baptism!

5. *How might wearing the robe of your baptism proclaim the Good News?*

Prayer

Clothe us, O God, with your love, and give us your grace to model the virtues of your compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and above all, your love. Amen

last word

As you get dressed each morning,
reflect on ways to put on God’s love.