

From this morning's Epistle, from the First Letter of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians:

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:7

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So, who do you think you are? Who are you and why are you here?

Perhaps you've heard the story of Naomi Lewis. She was 32 years old, with a 10-year-old son. And one day she woke up with no memory at all of the 17 years that had passed since she was 15 years old. One morning, all of a sudden, she became a teenager all over again; at least in her own mind; a teenager trapped, as she would later say, in a 32-year-old body. The last memory that she had on the day that she woke up in 2008 was a memory from 1992; a memory of having fallen asleep in the bunkbed that she shared with her younger sister, thinking about an upcoming exam.

So when she woke up, half her life later, she had no idea at all of where she was or why she was there. She was utterly amazed at the kinds of things that we now take for granted; thinks like touch screen cell phones and flat screen TVs; and not the least idea of what this Google thing was all about. Her first thought was that she must be dreaming; that she was having a nightmare. But she looked in the mirror and discovered, to her horror, that she was old (as only a 15-year-old can think that a 32-year-old is old). And as much as she realised that this boy who claimed to be her son looked like her and walked like her, she had no idea of where he had come from. Or why they were living in a completely different house in a completely different city.

In the end, with a lot of hard work, and the support of her sister, and the aid of the meticulous diaries that she had kept all though those years, she began to piece together her life. In effect, rediscovering who she was. And, in the process, discovering the trauma that she had endured throughout those missing years: years of physical abuse and mental health crises. All of which might have been the cause of her bizarre case of amnesia. And along the way, she came to understand herself better; rediscovering the passions and priorities that had been overtaken by everyday life. In a way, she lost those 17 years but discovered herself.¹

This week's readings from Holy Scripture speak to us about amnesia; that is, the kind of spiritual amnesia that we can so easily fall into. About how we forget who we are and why we're here. And about how we sometimes need to rediscover who we are.

Jesus speaks tearfully in this week's Gospel about the city of Jerusalem. And about the great destruction that he could see in their future. A future day when the city, and its wonderful temple, would be torn stone from stone, until all signs of its glory would be gone forever. Destroyed so thoroughly and completely, as only the great and might Roman army could do, that no stone would rest upon another. All because, as Jesus says, they did not know 'the things which belong unto [their] peace. Because, as we know from what the history books tell us, the day came not so many years later

¹ <https://www.express.co.uk/entertainment/books/579525/naomi-lewis-amnesia-thought-she-was-16>

when the people of Jerusalem would rise up in rebellion against the Romans.²

Thinking that they could make peace by force of arms; by violence and rebellion.

Which is sad and futile in itself, but all the sadder because is anyone out to have known how to make peace, it should have been the people of Jerusalem. יְרוּשָׁלַיִם. As it is on the Hebrew. The city's whose own name, ironically, means peace: Shalom.³ It's as if they'd forgotten who they were. Who they were called to be. As if they had forgotten their own name.

This week's readings are all about waking up and rediscovering who we are. So Paul, in this week's Epistle, reminds us of who we are called to be. St. Paul reminds us of something that we sometimes forget; of what it means to bear the name of Christ, as we all do; of what it means to be the Body of Christ. Where each member is so closely connected to the others that it's as if we live as one body. A body where each member uses their gifts not only for themselves but for the common good. For the welfare and happiness of all. That's who we are, as the Body of Christ.

And we are reminded that our peace depends not on our desire to live for ourselves but on our willingness to live with and for each other. To be so engaged in the life that we share in Christ that we live together as one. Not seeking just to satisfy our own wants and needs but seeking passionately the welfare and happiness of all. Not seeing every issue and question through the lens of our own personal comfort but through a lens that seeks to serve the common good. Not just taking care of ourselves or our own but living to bless the whole body. Even those parts that we're not really fond of.

So, whatever gifts I have; whatever gifts God has given to you, never really belong just to me or you. They belong to us all. To the whole Body. That's what it means to be the Church. To live in such a way that our actions and thoughts serve not just our own good but the good of all; and to be committed to using all of God's gifts in a way that benefits all.

So the question at the centre of this week's epistle is the question that we must ask ourselves every day if we are to live in Christ: how are we using these God-given gifts: to benefit the common good; to build up our relationships; to live compassionately and generously; without fearfully seeking to protect ourselves from each other?

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Today we rediscover who we are in Jesus Christ.

And who we are called to be, in Jesus Christ.

So what are the gifts that God has shared with you?

And how might we use these gifts together for the good of all?

² For the missiles from the engines flew over with such force that they reached the altar and the sanctuary, lighting upon priests and sacrificers; and many who had sped from the ends of the earth to gather round this far-famed spot, revered by all mankind, fell there themselves before their sacrifices, and sprinkled with libations of their own blood that altar universally venerated by Greeks and barbarians. The dead bodies of natives and aliens, of priests and laity, were mingled in a mass, and the blood of all manner of corpses formed pools in the courts of God. What misery to equal that, most wretched city, hast thou suffered at the hands of the Romans, who entered to purge with fire thy internal pollutions?
Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, Book V, written circa AD 75.

³ The name "Jerusalem" is variously etymologized to mean "foundation (Semitic *yry* 'to found, to lay a cornerstone') of the god Shalem", the name of the god of dusk in the Canaanite religion, whose name is based on the same root S-L-M from which the Hebrew word for "peace" is derived (*Shalom* in Hebrew). The ending *-ayim* indicates the dual, thus leading to the suggestion that the name *Yerushalayim* refers to the fact that the city initially sat on two hills.