

Youth Sunday Sermon

Please be seated. In our epistle reading for today, the Apostle Paul writes to the Romans, telling them of God's love and understanding. Now for those who don't know, during the early days of Christianity, the Romans did *not* like the Church at all. In fact, Christians were regularly persecuted, being robbed, tortured, and even publicly executed simply for their faith. Paul quotes Psalm 44 verse 22 "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.", showing the Roman Christians whom he writes to that he understands how perilous their position is. To practice Christianity in such times in secret was dangerous, let alone to publicly announce it. Yet Paul reminds his Roman brothers and sisters that even with all the violence and hatred that surrounds them, God's eternal light will always be with them. "If God is for us, who is against us?" is the crux of his message to them, and one we can learn from as well. In modern times, it may be hard to imagine Christianity being persecuted on such a large scale, even though it occurs in some nations right now. No, for many of us instead the conflicts we face are those that occur in our daily lives. Whether in work or in school, with family or friends or even strangers, adversity and conflict are an unavoidable part of life. Sometimes, it may seem that our problems are too large, too pressing and too many for us to overcome, and it becomes easy for us to be overwhelmed with doubt and despair. An unfortunate

example of this would be the very recent COVID-19 pandemic. I like, like many others lost a close family member during the early days of the coronavirus, and like most of the young people here, had to adjust to the new frontier of online learning. Losing out on a normal life experience for such a long period of time is damaging for anyone, especially so for our youth. I'm sure many of you can relate to what was supposed to be two weeks off becoming two years, and how much of a shock and a struggle it was to come to terms with the changing world. Feelings of fear, grief, and hopelessness were common, and were only made worse by the lack of friends and family that the isolation caused. But it is in times like these we are not so different from the early Roman Christians, and it is here that Paul's message shines the brightest. It is in our weakest moments that we can feel the Holy Spirit working through us the most, and it is when we feel the most hopeless that it is important to remember that our link to God is inseparable. As Paul says, "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is our Faith's greatest strength that we have an eternal and unbreakable bond with our Father through Jesus Christ, and it is that bond that sees us through all our troubles in life. Just how our Church has ended up growing through our digital broadcasts that the pandemic caused, so to have we as individuals grown and become stronger through adversity with the

help of our Lord. Paul's message is one of faith being rewarded, that no matter what happens, our belief in God will aid us through anything, and that he will never leave our side, a lesson that each and every one of us can carry for the rest of our lives.