



**The Kimberley Cross – a symbol of unity.**

**The upright is a spear-thrower from the North Kimberley**

**and the boomerang cross-arm is from the South of the Kimberley.**

**Weapons have become a cross – a sign of the peace of Christ**

**2 Corinthians 6:1-10**

As God’s fellow workers, we beg you once again not to neglect the grace of God that you have received. For he says: At the favourable time, I have listened to you; on the day of salvation I came to your help. Well, now is the favourable time; this is the day of salvation.

We do nothing that people might object to, so as not to bring discredit on our function as God’s servants. Instead, we prove we are servants of God by great fortitude in times of suffering: in times of hardship and distress; when we are flogged, or sent to prison, or mobbed; labouring, sleepless, starving. We prove we are God’s servants by our purity, knowledge, patience and kindness; by a spirit of holiness, by a love free from affectation; by the word of truth and by the power of God; by being armed with the weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left, prepared for honour or disgrace, for blame or praise; taken for impostors while we are genuine; obscure yet famous; said to be dying and here are we alive; rumoured to be executed before we are sentenced; thought most miserable and yet we are always rejoicing; taken for paupers though we make others rich, for people having nothing though we have everything.

**COMMENTARY ON 2 COR 6:1-10**

*From http://livingspace.sacredspace.ie/o1112r/*

Continuing the defence of his ministry against critics among the Christians of Corinth, Paul speaks eloquently and movingly of his experiences in working for the Gospel.

Our reading is a single, long sentence in the Greek, interrupted by the parenthesis of v.2, the quotation from Isaiah. The single main verb is “we appeal”. Paul is both exercising his ministry of reconciliation and tells how this ministry is carried out. He is saying that his message of reconciliation is being confirmed by the apostolic experience which he describes here.

He begins by calling on all to work together and that the grace and love of God, which Paul has opened up for them, be not be received in vain. One way of doing this is to become reconciled once again with him.

He quotes from the prophet Isaiah:

In an acceptable time I heard you,

and on the day of salvation I helped you.” (Is 49:8)

Right now, he tells them, is an acceptable time; the day of their salvation is right here. God is bestowing favour and salvation at this very moment as he addresses his letter to them.

The “day of salvation” is a concept that can be found in many parts of Scripture. It is described by the *Jerusalem Bible* in this way:

There is an intermediary period between the time of Christ’s first coming and his return. This period is the ‘day of salvation’, a time allowed for conversion; it is granted to the ‘remnant’ and to the pagans. Though the duration is uncertain, this time of pilgrimage may be regarded as being short and full of trials and sufferings which are a prelude to the glory to come. The end is at hand, the day approaches, and it is necessary to be on the watch and to use the time well that remains for one’s own salvation and that of others, leaving the final vindication to God.

By using this time well Paul is telling the Corinthians they can guarantee their being united forever with their Lord.

At the same time he denies that anything he has done or said can be seen as a stumbling block to their faith. He consistently acts in such a way that no fault can be found with his ministry and that of his companions. “In everything we commend ourselves as ministers, as servants (*diakonoi*, διακονοι), of God.” And that is confirmed by the list of experiences which follows.

Among the proofs of their sincerity is the great amount of suffering and trials they willingly undergo for the sake of preaching the Gospel. Nine items are listed: afflictions, hardships, constraints, beatings, imprisonments, riots when they were mobbed by angry and hostile crowds, long hours of work, deprived of sleep and food.

There is a paradox here in his pointing to experiences that would not normally be regarded as matters of pride and achievement but appear very differently when seen through the eyes of faith.

In spite of being so badly treated, he and his companions have proved their credentials as servants of God “by our purity, knowledge, patience and kindness; by a spirit of holiness, by a love free from affectation; by the word of truth and by the power of God; by being armed with the weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left, prepared for honour or disgrace, for blame or praise”.

The passage concludes with a series of seven paradoxes, a series of experiences which could not co-exist except in someone whose life was totally devoted to Christ and his Gospel:

Taken for impostors yet we are genuine;

obscure yet famous;

said to be dying and here we are alive;

rumoured to be executed before we are sentenced;

thought most miserable and yet we are always rejoicing;

taken for paupers though we make others rich;

for people having nothing though we have everything.

Paul perceives his life and work as a reflection of Jesus’ own. The last two examples are an illustration of an apparent contradiction that is characteristic of the true apostle. It is something that can be seen in the lives of people like Mother Teresa or Jean Vanier (of L’Arche).

What we see here is the special Christian experience of finding joy, happiness and peace in the midst of hardship, pain, rejection and persecution. This is the peace that Christ gives and which no human agency can take away. And, at the same time, it is the common experience that the living out of the Gospel of love and peace can engender such hatred and violence from those who feel threatened by the vision of Christ.

If we compare ourselves with Paul, most of us will find that we give up too easily in the face of criticism, that we expect that our efforts to be good Christians should be met with admiration and respect.

Paul was so convinced of Christ’s love for him that nothing that could happen to him could change that conviction. He found Christ present in every experience and his sufferings were for him only a privileged time to share in the sufferings of his Lord.

**How might you use the logo or the scripture with your students?**

**How might you use the logo or the scripture with your staff?**