

XIX TRINITY 2015
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
EPHESIANS 4.17 St. MATTHEW 9.1



Welcome to Anger Management 101...Saint Paul style!

Our good friend Paul has some things to say about anger: We should get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger...we should not get involved in shouting matches...we should not insult others...we should not have hateful feelings of any sort.

Instead, Paul says we should strive for the ideals of Christian behavior: We should be kind and tender hearted to one another...we should forgive one another...as God has forgiven us through Christ.

We could easily conclude from Paul's words we should never get angry. That would be the wrong conclusion. The key word in anger management is...management. Paul knew how to manage anger...tempered with love and compassion...to try to get people like "those Corinthians" and "those Ephesians" to change their behavior for the better.

Paul says the Church is like a body...the Body of Christ...whose parts must work together to build itself up through love. Failure to do so...as Saint Paul poignantly puts it...makes God's Holy Spirit sad. What he is saying is we must do everything within our power to get along and not sew seeds of dissention.

Petty squabbling annoyed Paul. Anger may be justified...but it must never lead us into the sin of hatred. That...as Paul puts it...gives the Devil an open door into our hearts. Instead we must look for words and actions that repair and build up or rebuild relationships.

Paul reminds us in words that are echoed in the Church's Baptismal and Confirmation Liturgies...Our hearts and minds must be made completely new, and we must put on our new selves, and live our lives accordingly.

Jesus himself used anger management effectively. On the first Palm Sunday Jesus went to the Temple in Jerusalem and turned over the currency exchange tables...a Godly

display of righteous anger intended to make the point it's not OK to get rich by ripping people off.

Jesus is all about forgiveness and repairing and rebuilding lives. When some people in today's Gospel brought him the paralyzed man on a cot, he was impressed by the faith the man's friends showed. He tells the paralyzed man to be courageous and his sins are forgiven.

Jews believed the power to forgive sins belonged to God and to God alone. Jesus claims the power to forgive sins for himself and backs up his claim by healing the paralyzed man.

Jews believed illness was a punishment for sin. When someone was cured...sin's power over that person was broken. Only a priest in the Temple could pronounce a person cured. What Jesus does in today's Gospel is heal the paralyzed man by making him both spiritually and physically whole.

In his commentary on today's Gospel in the *Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, Father Massey Shepherd writes...

"Today we know physical health and spiritual health are intimately bound together, and that there is often nothing more healing in its power than the relief and the release that come from a consciousness and acceptance of God's forgiveness."

Jesus commissioned the Apostles with the power to forgive sins in his Name. This power has been delegated to the priests of the Church. It is a power of duty conferred on a man when he is ordained priest and an obligation he must faithfully discharge with love and compassion.

Anger is a symptom of the overall condition called sin. Left unchecked it can lead to serious physical and emotional problems. Out of control anger can also lead to the sin of hate. Healing from anger and its consequences is possible. We can start by asking God to help us manage our anger and make our hearts and minds completely new and focused on forgiveness.

And we can always look to Saint Paul's course in Anger Management 101 for some sound advice.

