

SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT

LENTEN REFLECTIONS WITH FR JULIUS

WEEK 1 – WHO I AM IN CHRIST

DAY 1: I AM A CHILD OF GOD (GAL. 3:26. ROM. 8:15-16)

No doubt, unless we know who we really are in Christ, we will hardly enjoy what we daily do in life. Knowing who we are in Christ therefore is more important than what we do in life. In Adam, we were all mere creatures cut off from God because of original sin but in Christ, we have been adopted into the family of God for life. In the Son, we are now sons and daughters of God.

This is the best news ever. You may have lived as a slave in the past but in Christ you are now a child of God! You may have made some bad choices in the past but in Christ you are now a child of God. Even if you make some mistakes today, you are still a child of God. God never disowns his child! Even the prodigal son is still a child of God. No one can outgrow being a child of God. Even if you are called a boss in your company or a pastor in your church; or a president in your country; or a mother/father in your family, you are still a Child of God in Christ!

So as you celebrate your achievements and glory in your different labels of honour, please keep this gospel truth in mind, it will keep you humble and help you not to fumble or grumble - you are not just the role you play. You are not simply the mask you wear. You are not merely the status you acquire. You are not mainly the carrier you choose. You are obviously not the title you carry around; you are definitely not the position you occupy and certainly not the mistakes you make. You are something more - the child of the Most High God! "In Christ Jesus", Scripture declares, "You are all children of God through faith".

I don't know about you but I feel like shouting for joy right now! It feels so good to know that no matter what we are called in this life, We are still children of God in Christ. No matter where we are at the moment, we are still sons and daughters of God in Christ. We may be in 21 days lockdown right now, you may not be in a good space at the moment because of this but still keep in mind who you really are in Christ - a child of God. Know this, Be it and don't be afraid to say it over and over again - I AM A CHILD OF GOD - Speak your divine identity into reality!

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WEEK 1 – WHO I AM IN CHRIST

DAY 2: I AM A FRIEND OF GOD (JOHN 15:13-15. 2COR. 5:17-18 GNB)

If you cannot see God as your friend, you would hardly enjoy God as a father. And if you see yourself as an enemy of God, you seriously need the light of faith. There was a time when by nature we were Enemies of God. But that was then, that was in the past, that was in Adam; In Christ we are now friends of God. “I no longer call you servants”, scripture declares, “I call you Friends”.

Wow! He calls us friends. Do you know hear that? I feel like singing a love song to God right now! He said I am no longer a slave to my past, I am no longer a slave to my humanity, I am now friends with Divinity. In God’s friend list, my name is there! What a profitable friendship. In this life you may have so many enemies, but God is definitely not one of them! God is not your enemy; God is not against you! God is for you! God is your best friend! He is not monitoring you; He is mentoring you. He is a friend you can go to; He is a friend you can talk to! He does not condemn you! He will not reject you! He cannot ignore you; He can only love you!

Divine friendship is the best. Your human friends may not always be with you but your divine friend is always in you. Your human friends may defriend you but God will never defriend you. You are God’s friend for life. Take note; you are not God’s friend because you are perfect but because you are imperfect. In case you are wondering what qualifies you to be God’s friend, it is your imperfection. Christ was not called friends of perfect people but friends of tax collectors and sinners!

With God as your friend, you are never alone in life. In your friendship with God, His presence is a constant. It is not restricted by space and time. It does not fluctuate like Eskom. God’s presence in your life has no load-shedding. As your friend, God is always present, not just WITH you, but IN you! So today, when you feel lonely, hurt, broken and abandoned by anyone, remember you have a friend within. Your friends may not be able to be with you at home because of the lockdown, but God is always in you. You may not have a human friend around you right now but you have your divine friend inside you - God. Talk to him, play with him, laugh with him, stay with him and be proud of your friendship with him. Say with a smile - I AM A FRIEND OF GOD - Speak of your divine friendship even in hardship.

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DAY 3: I AM COMPLETE (COL. 3:16. PHIL. 3:11-13)

We are in a world where so many people are not happy because they believe something is missing in their lives. The funny part of it is that they feel that something is missing in their life just because they don't have all they want in life. No doubt, The old life we had in the past was a life full of many missing items- joy was missing, peace was missing and victory was missing but that was then, that was in Adam! Now the new life we have in Christ is a complete package! "You are complete" scripture declares, "In Christ".

Take note, you are complete not in yourself, not in the flesh but in Christ. This simply means that in Christ you don't need to become anything you are not. You do not need to become a celebrity to enjoy divinity. You do not need to become a billionaire to experience peace. You do not need anything else to become complete in Christ. You are complete already. Your life is complete. Your peace is complete. Your joy is complete. Your salvation is complete. All that you have at the moment is all that you need at the moment. you don't need what you don't have. You may want it but you don't need it if you don't have it right now. You don't need who you are not, you may want to become someone else but you don't need to become that person in order to experience the complete love of God in Christ.

I don't know if this makes any sense to you but for me it really does! In Christ, there is no pressure to become something or someone I am not right now. I am not expected to become, but to just be - to just be me! to just be happy with who I am and with what I have at the moment, to just enjoy me in full. In Christ my being is complete, my life is complete, my peace is complete and my joy is complete. There is no missing item in Christ. So, my dear, do not allow who you are not, to make you not to enjoy who you are right now in Christ. Do not allow what you don't have at the moment, to make you not to enjoy what you have in Christ! You are complete enough in Christ right now to be happy right now.

In Christ You are not lacking in anything you need! You are sufficient, you are adequate, you are full, you are ok. You are complete. Nothing is missing. The only thing missing is what you don't need in life; everything you need in Christ you have in life; if you don't have it in life you don't need it in Christ! So even if you don't have everything you want in life right now, remember you have everything you need in Christ! Even if you don't have free movement right now because of the lockdown, remember you have free life in Christ, you have a complete life in Christ. Believe it and say it aloud every time doubt comes - I AM COMPLETE IN CHRIST - use this truth to doubt your doubts!

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DAY 4: I AM A NEW PERSON (2COR. 5:17. MATT. 9:16-17)

There is a big difference between a 'new thing' and a 'new being'. New things add something fresh to creatures but becoming a new being refreshes everything about our nature. For instance, getting new clothes adds a fresh look to our appearance, making a new hairstyle adds fresh beauty to our face but becoming a new person does not just add something fresh to our body, it refreshes everything about our life. In Adam, we were full of mess but in Christ we have been refreshed, reborn and renewed. "Anyone who is in Christ", scripture declares, "Has become a new person; the old life is gone, a new life has begun".

This is not all about what you feel in the flesh, it is more about what is gone in the spirit - the old you. Take note of the fact that what is gone is not your old clothes, it is not your old car, it is not your old home but your old life; that life that was full of mess; that life that was full of fears, worries and guilts - is gone. We have begun a new life in Christ. We are no longer what we used to be in Adam. We are no longer our old self! We are now new creatures with new nature.

My dear I thank God for this good news! I don't know about you, but I was really tired of my old life in Adam, It was indeed full of nonsense. I don't envy my 'old me' at all. I am surprised that so many people are still in love with their old life of fears and guilt, no wonder they are not experiencing the fullness of life that is available in Christ. By the way, Scripture did not say that the new life WILL begin, it says it HAS begun - a new life of grace, hope and smiles has begun for you and I in Christ. You may not have had a wonderful yesterday but you have a new day; you woke up this morning as a new person, so even as you stay at home, embrace your new being, be your new self, live your new life, enjoy your new identity and say with a new confidence over and over again - I AM A NEW PERSON IN CHRIST - speak your new being into being!

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WEEK 1 – WHO I AM IN CHRIST

DAY 5: I AM HOLY (1PETER 2:9-10. 1 COR. 1:30-31)

I know so many of us will struggle to believe this, especially those who are convinced that they are hopeless sinners. For such people if we say “We are holy” we are proud but if we say “We are sinners” we are humble! No doubt, In Adam, we were sinners not just by our actions but by nature, but that was in the past, now that we partake in divine nature, we are no longer hopeless sinners. Listen to this, “God has brought you into union with Christ Jesus, and God has made Christ to be our wisdom. By him we are put right with God; we become God’s holy people and are set free”.

Take note of the phrase ‘We become’. What comes after that is very crucial. We were sinners in Adam but in Christ we became, not God’s sinners but God’s holy people. To say “We are sinners” therefore is to confess what we were in Adam but to say “We are holy” is to confess what we have become in Christ. The truth is, in Christ we are no longer sinners by nature, we are now partakers in the holy nature of God; “We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession...”

You may think it is pride for you to say you are holy but just so you know, God says You are and if he says you are, why do you insist on calling yourself a hopeless sinner. That sounds like disobedience to me than humility. This is not all about how you feel, it is more about what God says. God says you are holy, not in yourself, not in your flesh, but in Christ. You better believe it - you are not a hopeless sinner, you are holy. This does not mean that you are perfect, no, no one is perfect, it simply means that in Christ, you are in right standing with God, you have the holiness of God. If you understand this, you will be smiling right now.

One thing is clear, this is a holy day; you did not wake up this morning as a hopeless sinner. You are not a sinner today just because you sinned yesterday, you are holy today because you are in Christ. So no matter how you feel about your life in the past, believe what God says you are, Be who God says you are and say what God says you are... say it with joy - IN CHRIST I AM HOLY - Say what you are, not what you were.

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DAY 6: I AM ONE (GAL. 3:28. EPH. 4:3-6)

This is a world of 'Many'; we have many people, many communities, many cultures, many countries, many churches and many colours. We have blacks, white, Indians and coloured. It is indeed a world of differences; different personalities, different spiritualities, different denominations, different ideologies. In Adam, these differences were a big problem, but that was then, now in Christ, these differences make no real difference in our relationships. "In Christ..." scripture declares, "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ".

Take note of these words - "We are all one". We may have many countries in this world but in Christ, we are all one. We may have many races but in Christ, we are all one. We may have many churches but in Christ, we are all one. We may have many cultures but we are all one in Christ. This is good news; You may not have the same skin colour with me, but in Christ, I am one with you. I am one with you, not because we have no differences but because we have one Divinity, one Humanity and one Holy Spirit. I am one with you, not because we have one earthly father but because we both have one Heavenly Father.

By the way, in Christ, our unity is not against our diversity and our differences are not our major reference. So we do not undermine the diversity we see, we do not deny the differences we have, rather, we celebrate our diversities, we enjoy our differences, we emphasize our similarities and we respect each other's personalities. So today, as you stay at home, observe the diversities around you. As you relate with family, enjoy the differences you see in them. As you meet with friends, no need to criticize their personalities, accept them as they are and as you meet with people whose face you may not like, love the face of God in them. No matter the differences you see with your eyes today, say with your actions - WE ARE ALL ONE - Say it as it is, not as it seems.

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