

**My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

**According to an article titled “Saving the Family”, in Newsweek magazine, the American home is the most dangerous place outside a war or riot zone. It’s bases for this proposition are the following statistics: 30% of all American couples experience some form of domestic violence; 2,000,000 couples use lethal weapons on each other each year; 20% of all police officers are killed in the line of duty when answering calls regarding family fights; 6 to 15 million women are battered in the United States each year—probably the highest unreported crime in the country.**

**There is no doubt that bitterness, rage, and anger are dangerous emotions. Yet, it is these very emotions that are driving our public discourse and tearing our nation, our communities, and even some of our families apart. And now we learn that our nation’s adversaries, particularly Russia, are using these very emotions to undermine the character and values upon which we stand as a nation.**

**Not only are Republicans and Democrats shouting at and reviling each other, but so are moderate and “freedom caucus” Republicans; and progressive and mainstream Democrats.**

**Bitterness, rage, and anger fuel every discussion of race, guns, sexual orientation, immigration, and even what is true or false.**

**That is the bad news. The good news is the word that St. Paul speaks to us tonight:**

**“Brothers and Sisters: Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were sealed for the day of redemption. All bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ. So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed Himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.”**

**Imagine, if you will, that every time you felt bitterness or rage or anger rising up in you, you stopped for a moment to realize that you are grieving the Holy Spirit of God. Could that make a difference in the way that you listen to a person whose perspective is different than your own?**

**Imagine, if you will, that every time you heard, or God forbid, made a racially insensitive word or act, you stopped for a moment to realize that it is a sin against the God who created all of us in his own image and likeness. Could that lead you to try to put yourself in the mind and heart of the racially maligned person?**

**Imagine, if you will, that every time, the person, your spouse or parent or child, who hurt or disappointed, or disrespected you, you stopped for a moment to realize that as Christ has forgiven you and sacrificed Himself for you, that you too can forgive the offending party and sacrifice your own feelings out of love for him or her. Could that lead to a happier home and family for all of you?**

**Bitterness, rage, and anger are dangerous emotions. If you find you cannot control them when you are not perceived as “being always right”, hear St. Paul telling you they “must be removed from you”, for you are grieving “the Holy Spirit of God”.**