

# THE FINAL LAP A HOMILY FOR FUTURE PASTORS

*“It’s not about you. It’s always about Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”*

*By William Weinrich*



## HOMILY BASED ON THE READING FOR MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

*Colossians 1:15–23*



**W**e have come to the last lap of the academic school year, and for some of you it's the last lap before you go into the church to serve as ministers of Christ. For others of you, it's the last lap on the way to what will at some time be your last lap. To introduce and initiate this last quarter, I have been given a text to preach on that is among the most dense of the New Testament and which contains perhaps, with the exception of Philippians 2, the most exalted Christological hymn of the New Testament.

With utter transparency I declare to you that I have no idea how I'm supposed to do justice to this text in a chapel sermon, but as I was thinking about it, it occurred to me that although Paul is speaking to the general Christians at Colossae whose faithfulness he had just learned about through Epaphras, in many ways this text has to do with you who are preparing for the ministry. It is as though—so I'm suggesting—Paul is giving you a road map, a curricular outline, of what is to be your will, your soul, your heart, and your mind as you prepare for the ministry of Christ's church.

As often happens with lectionary readings, the reading begins in the middle of something, and we don't understand the function of this Christological hymn unless we see what has come just before it, which was not read to you, which is precisely the part of the text I think is the most important for you. So if I may, let me look at these words with you and make a few comments as we go along.

Paul has just learned from Epaphras the good faithfulness of the Colossae people, and then he addresses them directly with his hopes and desires for them. So let us allow Paul to be the stand-in for the faculty of this school and for ministers and laity throughout our church who are addressing you with their hopes and prayers.

“And so, from the first day we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9). It's true. We do not cease praying for you, that you who have been in our classes might be faithful servants of Christ's church, leading her by spiritual understanding and wisdom and by the knowledge of His will.

It's an interesting word, knowledge. In the Greek, it's

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*epignosis*, that is to say, a discernment or recognition of His will by a lived experience—I don't want to overstate this—but by a living experience with God. It's something you acquire. It's not textbook stuff; it's experiential knowledge, and so it invites you now but certainly then in the parish to keep close to your Savior and your God the Father by prayer, by reflection.

"So as that you might walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in everything you do and bearing fruit in every good work" (v. 10)—and here we have the language again—"increasing in the knowledge of God." It's not dogmatics as such. It's increasing in the knowledge of God by way of staying close to Him. This is the habit of the mind. It's the habit of the will. It's the habit of your actions.

"Being in every way strengthened with all power according to His glorious might for every endurance and patience with joy" (v. 11). Now it's this "with joy" that begins to introduce us to that Christological hymn: "that

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you may remain steadfast in *hypomonē*," that is to say, a certain submission to His will that may in fact entail suffering and long-suffering with joy.

"Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, for He has delivered us from the domain of darkness"—I

think we could translate 'from the domain' as 'from the dominion,' from the power of the dark one, the devil—"and has transferred us into the rule of His beloved Son" (vv. 12–13).

Now that's the translation, but the Greek says "into the kingdom, the rule of the Son of His love." That is an interesting phrase, would you not say? The Son of His love, Christ, is the bearer, indeed the incarnation, of the Father's love. And that really introduces us to the Christological hymn. "In whom"—in that Son of the Father's love—"we have redemption, namely, the forgiveness of sins" (v. 14).

I'm always amazed at the spatial character of biblical discourse. It places us into something real. He's not just helping us by holding our hand. Later on, Paul, in this letter, will speak of us walking *in* Him. The translation, which began the reading, says "he," but in fact you have a relative pronoun, "who." The Son of His love—who is that?

And now you have the most exalted speech of the New Testament concerning Christ crucified. He's the one through whom everything's been created. "All things have been created by Him, and unto Him" (v. 16). He's the goal. Remain steadfast in Him, and you are on the way. Remain steadfast in Him, and you will endure all the way through.

"All things have been created for Him, and He's the head of the church, His body" (vv. 16–18). If you are in Christ, O Pastor, you participate—can I say this? Well, I'm going to—you participate in and are in Him, the head of the church. That means you pray for it. You preach. You teach. You bind up the wounds of anxiety and fear and sin.

"For He is the beginning, and the firstborn of all the dead, in order that in everything"—I prefer the translation 'in everyone'—"He may be in a position of preeminence" (v. 18). As we are always told, or you are, it's not about you. It's always about Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Well, that's just a summary of what I think this school is all about. It's a little summary of what I hope in your heart and mind is your desire for yourself. It's our desire for you. And I think it's God's desire for you.

So as we enter into this final lap of the academic year, as we move forward to that glorious time when you will be assuming the mantle of your Savior for the benefit and eternal life of your sheep, you might open your Bible from time to time to Colossians 1:15 and following, and just contemplate the incredible, unspeakable majesty of your Lord in whose service you will be.

"The icon of the invisible God?" That's an exalted title.

Look into the heavens, the immensity of the sky, and with Paul Anka we sing, "He has the whole world in His hands." No, we can't see Him. He's too big. He's incomprehensible. But He's the icon of it. Who is? Christ crucified—the one who holds the whole world in His hands for you and for me in order that He might be known, that He might be served and worshiped—became man and for us and our salvation went to the cross for our redemption, namely, the forgiveness of our sins.

There is no cause that you would ever waver in trust and faith in that Jesus. By God's grace and favor, and by the everlasting power of His Son, may it prove to be so. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. 🏹



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