



**Lent reflection for February 27, 2024**

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### **A reading from 1 Corinthians 5:1-8**

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and the sort of sexual immorality that is not found even among gentiles, for a man is living with his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?

For I, though absent in body, am present in spirit, and as if present I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all of the dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch of dough, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

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### **Today's Reflection is by Erich Bilal**

The feeling of urgency in this passage is immediately apparent to me. The "actually" here speaks volumes – relaying a sense of disbelief: The arrogance with which the church in Corinth has allowed such hurtful behavior; the term "malice," implying an intentionality. It's a lot! There is the specific situation cited, but the immoral act and the inaction from the church community comes across as emblematic, which I think is important. The two things that stick out to me as I reflect on this scripture are the two questions:

The first: Should you not rather have mourned? Of course, the boasting here in place of sadness feels gross (and as Paul says, "evil"), but I recognize that I am not above the perverse joy of

thinking that I am “getting away with it.” I totally know that the dissonance here makes this mindset unsatisfying because there is a necessary hardening in myself to mute the spirit, and over time, that numb feeling can start to feel like a default setting. As I reflect, I remind myself that the alternative – sorrow – is much more vulnerable (and painful!), but eventually more fruitful and refreshing. A purge, or “removal,” in its own way. I imagine there’s a reason that crying releases endorphins...

And the second: Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all of the dough? To be honest, fungus already kind of freaks me out (watching the TV show ‘Last of Us’ certainly didn’t help), and the illustration is a powerful one to me. This highlights the sense of urgency to me. In my own life, I wonder what little bits of “old yeast” I allow to grow?...what things we proudly celebrate (or secretly nurture) that can be so harmful to ourselves and to others?

In this Lenten season, I will reflect on the ways that I can be deliberate in the renewal of my heart and mind. I’ll be looking inward to identify those bits of old yeast. That I can consider the newness that has been made available to me because of Jesus’ sacrifice, and that, through sincerity and truth, I can clean out the “old yeast.” In the end, I absolutely LOVE the call to celebrate. Not a boastful or arrogant celebration that comes from a misguided sense of freedom or accomplishment, but a celebration borne of gratitude. How refreshing!



Erich is a Houston-born, Chapel Hill-raised Brooklynite, living in Prospect Park South with his wonderful wife and daughter. As a landscape architect/urban planner, Erich relishes in the energy and complexity of NYC. When he’s not goofing around with his family, he’s likely listening to a broad spectrum of music genres, enjoying independent cinema, or rooting for one of his (many) sports teams.