

## NEW TESTAMENT II

### Preview Sheet

This second and final class on the New Testament will be looking closely at the life and spirituality of Paul, one of the Church's most influential figures. It is, in fact, his life and his reflections that comprise a majority of the entire New Testament! He is also one of the Church's most controversial and challenging thinkers. Even Scripture itself comments of Paul's letters: "in them there are things hard to understand that the ignorant and unstable distort to their own destruction . . ." (2 Peter 3:16).

For this class we have chosen Paul's first letter to the Corinthians as required reading. The "Introduction to First Corinthians" in the *New American Bible* states: "Paul's first letter to the church of Corinth provides us with a fuller insight into the life of an early Christian community of the first generation than any other book of the New Testament." And later it adds "the letter illustrates well the mind and character of Paul." The *Catholic Study Bible* claims that this letter more so than Paul's other letters gives us a "unique opportunity to see Paul himself up close . . . he is most personal while also demonstrating the versatility of his thinking."

Read 1 Corinthians carefully and, as we did with Matthew's Gospel, try to read it as a unified literary document. As you read, keep in mind that Paul's reason for writing was to respond to problems that had arisen in the faith community that he had initiated in Corinth in about the year 51. Your preparation task is to try to:

- a) identify those original problems that Paul is addressing,
- b) reflect on Paul's advice to the Corinthian community, and finally
- c) explore how Paul's wisdom can address today's issues; i.e. are the problems he addresses in any way present in modern Christianity?

