

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Oct 30th 2017**

“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16).

In the words of Pope John XXIII the goal of Vatican Council II (1962-1965) was opening the windows of the Church to the wind of the Holy Spirit. This opening had many ramifications for the Church. For myself perhaps the most significant was a renewed understanding of the dignity of human nature because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

And this reappropriation of the Spirit’s role was desperately needed. Along with my generation I had fallen into a trap of seeing human nature as complex of competing human drives for pleasure, riches, honor dominated by the effects of original sin. Sadly because of my training and conditioning I did not recognize the daily affects of the Spirit in my life. Even today I can recall a common bumper-sticker challenging this Pre-Vatican II self-image: “God doesn’t make junk!”

Paul in today’s epistle exults in his personal realization of his new identity in Christ. Recall that Paul was actually on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians when he encountered Christ. He is exhorting the Roman community: “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received Spirit of adoption, through which we can cry ‘Abba, Father’ (Rom 8:15).”

I recall my personal exhilaration in the late Sixties as I began internalizing the message of the Holy Spirit from Vatican Council II. I began recognizing God’s presence in my daily life -- not simply in prayer and sacraments. For the first time in my life I was able to name this presence. Yes, to my surprise the “fruits of the Holy Spirit” were abundant in my ordinary daily life – charity, joy, peace patience! This was a watershed in my spirituality.

And it should be noted that Vatican Council II drew attention to the “fruits of the Holy Spirit” not only in the lives of Christians but in the lives of all persons of good will: “All this holds true not only for Christians but for all persons of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all persons, and since the ultimate vocation of humanity is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every person the possibility of being associated with the paschal mystery “(The Church Today, #22).

I am moved by Paul’s words today to look anew with the eyes of faith upon all human beings -- and especially in our time upon the displaced, marginalized and disparaged, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

We are all children of God – every one of us!

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