

FIRST READING: 1 Corinthians 2:10b-16

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians:

Brothers and sisters: The Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God. Among men, who knows what pertains to the man except his spirit that is within? Similarly, no one knows what pertains to God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God. And we speak about them not with words taught by human wisdom, but with words taught by the Spirit, describing spiritual realities in spiritual terms. Now the natural man does not accept what pertains to the Spirit of God, for to him it is foolishness, and he cannot understand it, because it is judged spiritually. The one who is spiritual, however, can judge everything but is not subject to judgment by anyone. For “who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to counsel him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13ab, 13cd-14

The Lord is just in all his ways.

The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The LORD is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.

The Lord is just in all his ways.

Let all your works give you thanks, O LORD, and let your faithful ones bless you. Let them discourse of the glory of your Kingdom and speak of your might.

The Lord is just in all his ways.

Making known to men your might and the glorious splendor of your Kingdom. Your Kingdom is a Kingdom for all ages, and your dominion endures through all generations.

The Lord is just in all his ways.

The LORD is faithful in all his words and holy in all his works. The LORD lifts up all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

The Lord is just in all his ways.

Gospel: Luke 4:31-37

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

Jesus went down to Capernaum, a town of Galilee. He taught them on the sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching because he spoke with authority. In the synagogue there was a man with the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out in a loud voice, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One

of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Be quiet! Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down in front of them and came out of him without doing him any harm. They were all amazed and said to one another, "What is there about his word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." And news of him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection for the 22nd Tuesday of the Year

We used to have a paperback Catholic dictionary and encyclopedia when I was a kid. I once looked up the word power. I have never forgotten what I read. It is a magnificent outpouring of love by the Holy Spirit. This is what Paul's words to day show us. How do we know God? We have received God's gift of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, Paul has told us that the Spirit scrutinizes us. What is that about? God has created each of us in God's image and likeness. God knows all we think, feel, desire and do.

God knows us when we do good and when we sin. Amid this, we know that God is infinite, eternal and unconditional love. We can never lose God's love. For us to face God's judgment, God will always forgive our sins since each of us is God's beloved child. God gave us life, faith, family, intelligence, talent and our community. We come from God and we return to God. As with creation, God saw each of us as good. When the Spirit scrutinizes us, the Spirit finds God indwelling with us. That's the good news that we need to know and remember. It's a way we can know God too, within.

Since we are all of the Spirit, we are all spiritual. The word spirit comes from the Latin word for breath. Since we have breath, we are all alive and in this way alive with the Spirit of God. We are also people of prayer. Sometimes we equate prayer with being the prayers we pray. Prayers are merely a means to prayer. At mass we have many prayers and at least three scripture readings. Often the celebrating priest will give a homily. All of a sudden, and at any time during mass, we can find our minds and attention far away from what happens at mass.

We may remember our loved ones, what we have to do for the day or go over some of the problems we face. If you're anything like me, that can feel like daydreaming. It is not! Look at it this way. The Holy Spirit, having scrutinized your souls, has discovered what you need to bring to prayer before God. To name the experience this way puts an entirely new and divine light on it. Prayer is a dialogue and the Spirit works in this way so we can bring to prayer the things that are of the deepest importance to us and to God. This experience is what we can welcome and not avoid. We let the Spirit work from within us to become the spiritual people that we are.

What is the name of a teacher who teaches in a synagogue? A rabbi. Jesus is teaching in a synagogue; so who is he? A Rabbi. Rabbinical teaching hasn't changed much since the time of Jesus. Rabbis teach by asking questions and answering questions with one more. When Luke says that Jesus taught with authority, he had real content to his teaching as opposed to leading

the direction of the questions. Jesus answered questions and taught in parables. Jesus authority, we know by faith, came from his divine power, which I defined above as the magnificent outpouring of love by the Holy Spirit. Good news to the people Jesus taught and the gospel for us.

The sign of the outpouring of love Jesus showed was by his sign of healing the man possessed. Luke has connected these two events. Jesus taught and Jesus healed with authority and power; out of God's love. These events are connected to Jesus ministry, or service of others. As a result of these events, people began to ask questions of who Jesus can be. They showed signs of the beginnings of faith with their wonderment. The possessed man already knew him. Was his outburst in the synagogue meant as an accusation or as a statement of faith? Can demons have faith? Was the man crying out for God to save him by professing his faith? I think the latter. When we approach Jesus in desperation, what do we believe? Can we know our need for Jesus?

May our lives always be filled with the breath of God.

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