

OCTOBER 25 2025 MSGR. ROBERT NUSCA

In today's Gospel, Our Lord calls forth in those who would be His followers a genuine spirit of repentance. And yes, the parable of the fig tree does contain a rather consoling message about God's patience. But it is also clear that Our Lord is issuing a solemn warning against any sense of complacency in our response to His call to turn away from the life of sin.

Our God is a loving and merciful God. But at the same time Jesus is calling those who would be His disciples to follow the way of the Gospel: to make their journey along the narrow way of the Cross, and to do so without delay. For ultimately, here, as elsewhere in His teachings, Jesus calls His followers to bear forth the fruits of the Spirit in the proper season of life, unlike the fig tree that has failed to bear fruit at the appropriate time.

In today's 1st Reading, from the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul offers us some important insights for living the life of the Spirit so as to produce the spiritual fruit that Jesus is calling forth in us in today's Gospel. For as we have heard, Paul sets before us a very sharp contrast between a life lived according to the "flesh," and life in the "Spirit." And several things emerge for our reflection.

First of all, when Paul refers to "the flesh," what is implied is something more than natural or physical inclinations. For he is cautioning against living in this world according to the values of the old age of Adam, marked by a spirit of rebelliousness against God, sinfulness and death – both physical and spiritual.

And so, Paul's use of the term "flesh" here leads us to reflect upon broader notions, such as worldliness, selfishness and the failure to live according to the Spirit. All of these things impede our growth and progress in the spiritual life.

Secondly, Paul's reflections here should be seen within the larger context of his views on salvation history and his comments on Adam and Christ. Adam brought about the fall through original sin, but Jesus Christ is the "last" or "New Adam," who has come from heaven to reverse the effects of original sin, and to lead us to everlasting life. For Paul, the old Age of Adam, and is characterized by sin and death, and alienation from God. But the new age of grace, of the Holy Spirit and everlasting life has been inaugurated by Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Indeed, in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 he states clearly that "For just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." Again, it is precisely through the obedience of Jesus Christ, the "New Adam," to the will of God the Father, that the negative effects of the Fall brought about by the first Adam are overcome.

And so, Our Lord calls forth in us a genuine spirit of repentance. For one's everlasting destiny will be linked to, or hinge upon whether one lives a life of sin and rebelliousness like Adam, or whether one lives in accord with the transforming graces, the power and light of the Spirit given to us by the Father and the Son at Pentecost.

At the same time, yes, while the old age of Adam has come to an end, its effects continue to be felt until the return of Christ at the end of time. While in this world we experience temptation. We are prone to sinfulness, and are subject to the realities of sickness, aging and eventually to death. But by living in accord with the Holy Spirit, and by following Jesus on the way of the Cross through this world we begin now to enter into the new age brought about by Jesus Christ, the New Adam.

And so, Paul strongly encourages the faithful to strive without delay to walk in the Spirit, indeed, to live as a dwelling place of the Spirit, and to become a living temple of the Holy Spirit. For as Paul states so clearly in his 2nd Letter Corinthians 5:17, 'if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation, and behold, all things have been made new.' And so, the need for us to prepare without

delay for life beyond this world: for eternal life with God and the Angels and Saints in heaven.

Thirdly, at a more personal level, Paul leads us to consider the conflict between the forces of good and evil at work within the soul and ultimately of a human heart divided. Indeed, in Romans chapter 7:15 Paul goes so far as to say that he does not understand his own actions. For he does not do the thing he wants to do, but rather the sinful thing that he does not wish to do. In Romans 7:22-23 he states: “In my inner being I delight in God’s law.” But he goes to speak of another law that is at war within himself, making him captive to the power of sin that dwells within. And so, for ourselves, while tempted to sin, we are called to make every effort to live according to the Spirit.

Here, Paul’s insights into the struggle at work in every human heart, lead us to consider Jewish lines of spiritual reflection, and what would come to be spoken of as the ‘two ways,’ or two inclinations. Namely, the inclination to do good and the impulse to do bad, which while rooted in a number of biblical texts, would go on to become an important distinction in Rabbinic literature.

Likewise, an anonymous early Christian work, The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles, or Didache, from the late 1st or early second century also figures in the discussion. It teaches about the moral life, and speaks of the importance of making the choice between the ‘two ways’ the way of ‘life or death,’ the way of ‘blessing or of curse,’ (1:1); the way of ‘light or the way of darkness’. The author calls us to Love God and our neighbour as ourselves; here, echoing Our Lord’s own teachings to: ‘Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who persecute you.’

St. Augustine will develop Paul’s line of thought as he warns against turning our attention away from the Creator God, and focusing our energies upon the perishable things that God has created. For by neglecting the life of the Spirit

and becoming attached to things that are inferior, we distance ourselves from God and the divine graces He offers us to help bring forth the spiritual fruit that we have been called to bear in this life. Ultimately, as Paul states so clearly in his letter to the Galatians 6:7-8: “You will only reap what you sow. Whoever sows in the flesh, from the flesh will reap corruption; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” Those who sow to please the Spirit then, will reap the fruits of the Spirit, namely: “love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Indeed, if we live our lives in accord with the Holy Spirit, we will produce precisely the kind of fruit that shows that the Holy Spirit is at work within us, and that our hearts belong to God, and these fruits will manifest in good deeds beginning with charity.

Finally, Paul’s insights here, lead us to reflect upon the notion of human freedom, and contain a very relevant message for us in our own time. In his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians St. Paul reminds us that: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” True freedom—the fullness of human freedom—is both a freedom from the powers of sin, corruption and death; and conversely, a freedom for life in the Spirit.

And so, as we continue to celebrate this Mass, let us pray for the intercession of Mary the Mother of God, for the grace to live always in the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit. We pray for the grace to be persistent: striving at all times to do God’s will and so to overcome whatever temptations may be keeping us from living according to the Spirit and from becoming living Temples of the Holy Spirit. And let us pray for that the spiritual nourishment of the Eucharist that we are about to receive at this Mass, will lead to the blossoming of all the spiritual gifts that God wants to bring forth in our souls.