

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Retreat for Seminarians** St. Charles Borromeo Tuesday and Wednesday,  
May 29-30, 2001 Closing Mass Homily **Consecrated in Truth** Seventh Week of  
Easter Wednesday, May 30, 2001 Acts 20:28-38; Jn 17:11-19

Shepherd the church of God, which he has acquired at the price of his own blood. I know that when I am gone, savage wolves will come among you who will not spare the flock. From your own number, men will present themselves distorting the truth and leading astray any who follow them.”

“As long as I was with them, I guarded them with your name which you gave me, I kept careful watch, and not one of them was lost, none but him who was destined to be lost—in fulfillment of Scripture.”

Savage wolves arise to lead astray others. Jesus prays that he lose none of those the Father had given him except the one who was destined to be lost. But the whole point of both readings is that we needn't be overly concerned because everything is in the Father's hands. Paul, of course, does exhibit a certain sort of anxiety; and there is room for anxiety to some degree. But the Church is really the work of the Spirit. And Jesus, in this prayer to the Father, is very well aware that the Father is the one who has maintained the integrity of Jesus' own mission. He also recognizes that one had to be lost, and that's all part of the nature of a human organization.

Human organizations are like any living organism. To grow it needs new members, but it also has to eliminate waste; and not every form of food is useful. Not every person and not every spirit in a person is useful to the work of God. For this reason John warns us to discern every spirit. Not everything contributes to what God is trying to do

precisely because we in the spiritual world have a capacity for independence. We can have our own ideas of what ought to be, as Judas did! And really, Judas' betrayal was simply a matter of Judas being loyal to himself more than to God. And doubtless in his own mind, up to a point, he really thought he was doing the right thing. Well, our consciences also can be deluded.

But regardless of Judas and regardless of the various wolves that arise even from our own ranks to mislead people, following lights other than Christ, that will never derail the word of God because it's dauntless. And there will be times when we will be tempted to really lose confidence. And there will be times when we may be tempted to become confused ourselves. And part of this might be a necessary stage of maturation, but we always have to focus on whose Church this is. This is God's Church, in Christ. He began it, and he will continue its work. And we have every reason to be full of confidence that if we discern every spirit, we will be led and consecrated by the truth. So Jesus himself, in today's reading says, "I consecrate myself for their sake." And later he prays, "Consecrate them by the truth." It is the truth that will make us free.