

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Touching God through Christ Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas Monday,
December 30, 2013 8:15 AM **1 Jn 2:12-17**; Lk 2:36-40 (God is both within us in the
Spirit and God is also out there in the world of humanity, beckoning our service.)

This morning we read from the First Letter of John. It's a beautiful letter, a very simple letter. It's focusing on what we already have been given. In Christ we have already been given knowledge of God. The whole point is that it is through Christ that we come to God or God has come to us, or both. And so we do know. We need not founder around. We do know what God is like. **We do touch God through Christ, and God touches us.** The whole point is that God has identified with humanity and that we remain forever in touch with God through our own humanity and the humanity of others—both. **God is both within us in the Spirit and God is also out there in the world of humanity, beckoning our service.**

“Whatever you do to the least, you do to me.”

Meanwhile, there is the world. Now the “world” of course is a word used here in a very negative sense. It doesn't mean the world God created. It means the world human beings have created in a distortion of the image of God. It means **the world in which many things take the place of God as the supreme value.** St. Thomas Aquinas lists four or five of them: money, honor, sensual pleasure. That's all I can think of right now, but there are others, a few others. If we think about it, that is the world that is **constantly beckoning us through the media**, first and foremost. The media is intruding into our space, into our privacy, into our homes with this beckoning to turn our lives over to it, the world, to let the world determine for us what is really desirable. That's what **advertising** is all about. Let me tell you what you need. Let me tell you what will make you happy.

And of course **if we keep in mind what we know, it won't affect us.** But then the young are very affected by it. Those who have not really been schooled in the gospel are affected

very much by advertising and by all the messages coming all the time through the media about what we really need, what we have to have, what will make us happy, what will bring us respect—and it's really so sad.

John wants to bring us back to the soundness of truth. “The truth will make you free.” The truth is we have been redeemed. The truth is we have the Spirit of God within us. We have actually no need of a teacher, according to John. **The Spirit will teach us, will guide us, will lead us.** We have every reason to rejoice and to be glad and to **look forward to a wonderful prosperous, not new year, but new age in Christ.** Meanwhile, there is a certain amount of suffering going on that we need to address as well, as best we can, do what we can while the light lasts.