

Getting a Heart on Fire Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, October 23, 2015
8:15 AM **Rom 7:18-25;** Lk 12:54-59 (St. John of Capistrano, priest) (The great value of inner conflicts) (The Holy Spirit, who is God as Christ is God, can motivate us, can give us the motivational power, the emotional charge, the feelings we need to move on with this ideal once we have chosen it.)

We continue the reading from the Letter to the Romans, and here St. Paul is expressing his dismay and even disgust at his own inner conflicts. But there should be really no dismay that we have inner conflicts; in fact, **it is through our inner conflicts that we gain strength.** No great person has ever arrived at anything without a great deal of conflict, so this is part of life. For an example you might use a person who wants to be an Olympic champion: swimming, running, whatever. It would be preposterous to suggest that just because the person has this intention that, bingo, they are really able to do whatever. **No to be a champion requires great training.**

Well, the same with the life of God; it requires great training. **It's great to have the idea; that's in the mind,** but now the body has to be trained. And **what does the body need in order to trained? It needs motivation. Where does motivation come from? The emotions.**

You will notice in this letter that St. Paul is jumping around with the words “me” and “I.” He is not sure where to put them. He starts out saying there's no good in me, that is, my flesh. Then later he says, well, that isn't really me because my inner self, by which he means his mind or his intentionality, is in total agreement with the law of God. So who is he? Well, he is both. That's why **in the Scriptures the human person is called spirit, soul, body—**spirit, soul, body. **Spirit is mind, the inner self** here. **Soul is the emotions,** not spoken of here, but **the necessary motivating component to get anything done.** And third, **body,** of course **the physical apparatus that allows us to live on this planet.** Without a body we wouldn't be here—spirit, soul, body—**all three have to get into harmony and that itself is properly called work.** That's work! And everyone has to do work on earth. If it's being an Olympic champion, we have to work at it. If it's being Christlike, we have to work at it. In fact, **being Christlike requires the greatest amount of work because it's the greatest possible ideal.** Being an Olympic champion is easy in comparison. The difference is that being an Olympic champion requires a certain kind of body or physical makeup. That's not

necessary to be Christlike. But the same discipline is required, the same unwavering motivation, and likewise, vision.

Now this is the topic of a novel by Robert Louis Stevenson called *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In this novel a man has **this inner conflict** between his own very noble profession of physician with its civilized exterior and something else, some inner, hidden—Mr. Hyde—depraved, violent sort of evil.

St. Paul had no way of explaining this, except sin, because **St. Paul believed** that God created Adam perfectly and what proceeded later was all due to human fault. In other words, **we are created in a perfect image and likeness of God, and then we have fallen from that. So St. Paul develops the idea later St. Augustine will call “original sin.”** This really comes from St. Paul, from this very letter. However, the **theory of evolution** offers an easier explanation. Humanity begins with a lower being endowed in time with the powers of reason and free will. However, there’s already something there; **there is this animal nature that has to be tamed**, that has to be disciplined, that has to be chastened. So it isn’t really a law of sin as much as it’s **the law of the wild that lies hidden beneath all people and has to be brought into order by work, training, training in Christlike living.**

So first of all, **we have to start out in the inner self, in the mind, with a desire, an intention, to be disciples of Jesus Christ.** Not everyone has that; in fact, many people don’t, just as many don’t want to run in the Olympics. Even people who call themselves Christians lack this inner intention, this desire, this choice to be Christlike. We have to start with that. **Then we need motivation.** Where does motivation come from? The Holy Spirit. We cannot motivate ourselves to become Christlike. **The Holy Spirit, who is God as Christ is God, can motivate us**, can give us the motivational power, the emotional charge, **the feelings we need to move on with this ideal once we have chosen it.** And of course **our bodies will protest**, having been already habituated to an easier life. So struggle continues. And Karen Horney in her very great pre-World War II book called *Our Inner Conflicts* talks about **the great value that conflicts have in opening up all the potential within human beings.** So this is what St. Paul is talking about, his life and our life struggling to become the great being God has created us to be.