

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Living in Flesh or Spirit Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time Saturday,
October 24, 2015 8:15 AM **Rom 8:1-11; Lk 13:1-9** (St. Anthony Claret, priest)
(BVM) (Humanity is created to be an image of God, utilizing of all the resources that
human beings have at their disposal for God's purposes, not for their own.)

Today we are reading the Letter to the Romans, the continuation in which St. Paul is contrasting **two different ways of living**, very similar to today's gospel as well—two different ways of living. What he calls **the “flesh”** is living merely to survive, **living for the purpose of oneself**, to promote oneself, to promote one's causes, to promote one's family, or one's business, or one's political party, or whatever. It's earth-bound thinking. It's all about today. **It's all about me, or us maybe, but it's not about God and God's purpose.**

The second kind of life St. Paul talks about is **life in the spirit**. Here he is not talking about the Holy Spirit, but of course life in the spirit requires the Holy Spirit. **The Holy Spirit is the difference between life in the flesh and life in the spirit. By “spirit” he means another dimension of humanity, a humanity that corresponds to God's original intention in creation.** God did not create human beings simply to survive or to do whatever they please. He created them to be with him, to work with him and to live with him for all eternity. So human beings are not like other species that come and go. They are not created to come and go. **They are created for God in a very unique way.**

People **living in the flesh** do not recognize this. They **model their lives after the other forms of life on earth**, and this is wrong. But even the world of trees reflects this difference because even trees are created for something, as in the case of the fig tree. As alluded to in today's gospel, fig trees are supposed to produce figs. And a fig tree that doesn't produce figs is worth nothing except to be cut down. **So human life in the flesh is like a fig tree that doesn't bear figs.** It may produce all kinds of results, but none of them are what God is

looking for, not the fruit they were created for. Human life has all kinds of possibilities.

There's all kinds of creativity that can be used for all kinds of different purposes, but this is not what the human species is created for. **It's created to be an image of God.** It's created to be like God, a partner with God in the completion of the creation, in the building of the kingdom, in the **utilizing of all the resources that human beings have at their disposal for God's purposes, not for their own.**

So these stories in the Scriptures, in the gospel and the teachings of St. Paul, are all meant to alert people to the fact that **there is an objective purpose to life quite independent of their particular wishes, choices, intentions,** and so on. And clearly the problem in the world today is that so many people with so much power are pursuing their own ends and not the ends of God. Thus the terrific strain on nature, on creation, **the tremendous pressure on the world that God has created because it isn't following the divine plan.** People all over the world sense this: they are suffering; they are full of anxiety, but they may not know that there is a remedy. **And the remedy is found in God who has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ.**