

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**The Holy Spirit to Teach Us**      Sixth Week of Easter      Wednesday, May 4, 2016  
8:15 AM    **Acts 17:15, 22—18:1;**    Jn 16:12-15    (So the people of God have to take on a new urgency and recognize that, yes, many things do really depend on their choices in this very moment of history.)

**“God has overlooked the times of ignorance, but now he demands that all people everywhere repent because he has established a day on which he will judge the world with justice through a man he has appointed, and he has provided confirmation for all by raising him from the dead.”**

Now we have the idea that things have changed a great deal in history, but in some ways not much has changed. **Circumstances have changed; people are the same.** In St. Paul’s day there were people who sought the ultimate meaning of life; in other words, they were seeking God, and that’s what Paul is acknowledging. They even had a little shrine to the unknown God. The problem is they had all kinds of shrines and **they believed all kinds of different things and they were all mixed up.** And they may have believed that various spirits actually dwelt in these little shrines. And they may have even thought that these little statues or idols that they carved were even a presence of someone.

Not only that, but in time **as the Christian gospel prevailed in many ways things remained the same.** Yes, for many centuries there were great thinkers who thought about the mysteries of Christ. There were great saints. There were great architects who tried to enshrine the mysteries of Christ in stone, in glass, in various forms, and they did beautiful work, yes. But what about the people on the whole? The people on the whole were just like the people at the time of St. Paul: mixed up. Oh, they believed Jesus was God and they believed Mary bore him and so on, but **many of their beliefs were superstitious.** They believed in fate, and they believed in stars and they believed in this and that. **So everything is mixed up.**

**The point St. Paul is trying to make is there is a true God and the true God is the one who actually fashioned everything as it is, caused it to come into being, and sustains it. And this God is not far from you. But much of what we learn and much of what we imagine is just nonsense.** And that's what this is about. It's about trying to be purified from all this nonsense and letting God be our teacher, which is what Jesus is talking about in the gospel: "I will send the Spirit. The Spirit will teach you." Our imagination is just a source of—what? Anything, fiction. And it's wonderful that human beings have all this creative power, but it's not the source of truth. **We need the Holy Spirit to teach us,** and we have always needed that.

**Unfortunately, only a few people have availed themselves of this power of the Spirit.** If our world is to be effected for the better, then more and more people have to avail themselves of the power of the Spirit. This can't be just a matter of a few saints, a few architects, a few theologians. **It has to be the people of God really letting the Holy Spirit teach.** There has to be a new openness. And if there isn't, then the world will just continue on its spiral downward. So the people of God have to take on a new urgency and recognize that, yes, **many things do really depend on their choices in this very moment of history.** You look around the world, there aren't any real good answers out there. And this is all by design. **St. Paul says, "The world has been made subject to futility."** Exactly! Politics is futile. Economics is futile. Not that we don't need politicians, we need leaders, statesmen. We do need economic activities. But it's all futile without something else: the teaching of the meaning of life from the power of the Holy Spirit. And God's people have been way too inactive for way too long, and this is a wake-up call.