

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Christian or Human Morality** Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday,  
October 12, 2016 8:15 AM **Gal 5:18-25;** Lk 11:42-46 (what St. Paul is talking  
about, which is the word of God, is an ethic that is unitive and harmonious, that helps connect  
with others as well as with God and opens our hearts to true enjoyment of life in a spirit of joy  
and a spirit of love, which is of course the fruit of the Holy Spirit.)

One of the questions in moral theology in the last fifty years is: **Is there a distinctive Christian morality, or is Christian morality simply human morality?** Is a good Christian and a good human being the same thing, morally speaking? That is a very good question, and it is a question that is prompted by St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians because **he is trying to get away from this very particular idea of a Torah of God**, where God speaks and writes rules, so to speak, and instructs every little detail of life. It's getting away from that. He is saying, look, **just look at human life**, look at the fruits of human life. **There is good fruit and bad fruit. You can just discern them by yourself.** You don't need a degree.

During the reading that Ben read this morning Paul lists some of the very **negative fruits of human life, the dark side** you might say. What they all have in common is that they are all divisive. **Everything about negative behavior divides us from others.** Whether it's physical harm or whether it's a sort of emotional distance or some kind of hostility or some sort of oppression or taking advantage of others, it's always divisive. Whereas **all the fruits of the Spirit are unitive; they bring people together.** And to bring people together **they allow for a deep enjoyment that we cannot have all by ourselves.**

Now the question is, going back to the beginning, is this just a human observation or is it a matter of Christian revelation, the word of God instructing us? I don't actually know. I would be tempted to say that it's just a human observation; anyone could have this observation. But then looking around our world I can see many, many, many do not. **There are many people who really believe that all kinds of divisive, hostile ways of living are perfectly fine.** How do we

explain this if we believe we are all made in the image and likeness of God, we believe we are all given the wherewithal to form our conscience? I do not know. That is one of the great perplexing questions of today. **How could so many people really believe what they do, sometimes even in the name of God? So that is the question.**

So is there a distinct Christian ethic or is it simply a human ethic. I'm not sure. But **what St. Paul is talking about, which is the word of God, is an ethic that is unitive and harmonious, that helps connect with others as well as with God and opens our hearts to true enjoyment of life in a spirit of joy and a spirit of love, which is of course the fruit of the Holy Spirit.**

Now perhaps the Holy Spirit is the real key. And the Holy Spirit of course is not limited to believers. **The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of all people, if they let him.** And perhaps **what people really need is to see the Spirit in action in people who are identified with the gospel of Jesus Christ.** That might be the missing ingredient in the world today.