

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Living within the Trinity January 2 to Epiphany Friday, January 6, 2017 8:15 AM
1 Jn 5:5-13; Mk 1:7-11 (St. Andre Bessette, religious) (we are constantly in need of
deliberately nurturing our hope and faith and desire for God.)

**“On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit,
like a dove, descending upon him.”**

This is the Gospel of Mark. It's agreed by everyone to be the first gospel. Now what he is saying here is that the Spirit descended upon him like a dove. **When Luke copied this gospel, told it in his own words, he changed the actual meaning of the phrase “like a dove” and made the Spirit look like a dove, which is where we got the symbolism of the dove for the Holy Spirit.** That's not actually what Mark meant. He meant that the Spirit descended like a dove descends. If you look at doves, they are very gentle creatures and their descent is very gentle, not like a hawk, for example, or an eagle. The Holy Spirit is not an eagle. The Holy Spirit is not a hawk. **The gospels are inviting us into this life of the Holy Spirit. But it's something that comes very gently and we can easily thwart it,** push it aside or just ignore it, in fact then not even noticing because it's like a dove. Doves don't invade people's space. **The Holy Spirit does not invade our space, only comes when we are willing, accepting and welcoming.**

Now in the first reading from the Letter of John, John says Jesus came in water and blood and not with water only. What is that about? Well, apparently **there were people in the early Church that accepted very much that the Word of God had become human, but they balked at the whole idea that Jesus, the Word of God, really died on the Cross.** They said, well, there must be some other explanation: how could the Word of God die on the Cross? This just—they couldn't take it! It's the story, but they couldn't take it. It was not pretty enough. They wanted a wonderful, beautiful belief. The Word of God becoming human is a beautiful belief;

everyone loves Christmas. But John wants to say, yes, but that's not the whole story, because the Word of God met resistance, bloody resistance.

So the Word of God can be resisted, and the Holy Spirit can be resisted. And this is why we are constantly in need of deliberately nurturing our hope and faith and desire for God. It's not like it's all natural; actually it's against nature. **Human nature is often about self-will and self-love.** And when the Word of God comes trying to unite us to the divine Spirit of self-giving and self-sacrifice and love poured out, there's resistance from the very force that has kept the human species in existence for fifty thousand, a hundred thousand years or however long we have been around. **This power of self-preservation doesn't like the Cross,** doesn't like the blood, wants something nicer, but this is the truth.

And those who acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God who has come in water and blood, they are the ones who have the truth. And this truth can set us free. And if we are set free, **then we can live within the Trinity,** then God really will be our Father just as much as God is Jesus' Father. And then the Holy Spirit will really be our spirit just as much as the Holy Spirit is Jesus' spirit. That's the whole idea: what's mine is yours; what's yours is mine. "I call you friends, not servants, not slaves." **So the call of the gospel is to a new level of living that, for the most part, we have not been responding to. We need to think about this and to ask God to lead us to the next step in our own personal lives.**