

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**God's Grace for Everyone**    Twenty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time    Monday, September 18, 2017    8:15 AM    **1 Tm 2:1-8;**    Lk 7:1-10    (It's possible for the Holy Spirit to speak directly to the heart of every human being and to guide human beings and to draw out of them the good that is actually basic since we are made in the image and likeness of God.)

Today we are reading from the **First Letter of St. Paul to Timothy**. Now we are not absolutely certain that St. Paul wrote this. It would seem probably not because it's an awfully late letter. Its internal structure indicates developments that hadn't really happened yet by the time Paul died. He died, after all, by 65 A.D., so **this is probably more toward the end of the first century.**

But it is somewhat **in the tradition of St. Paul, and he has this sense of the universal will of God to save all people**, and it's very important we keep this in mind because in Christian tradition, believe it or not, this was not always kept in mind. There are Christian groups, and I won't name them here, that act as if salvation is a very select little group of people, that God's will is only to save a certain small number of people. This letter says **it is God's will that "everyone be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."** And if it is God's will, that means also **that God's grace proceeds to the heart of all people in one way or another.**

Now sometimes even in our Church the assumption has been made that grace somehow has to be mediated. That means either the gospel has to be preached literally in words or there has to be some sign or some kind of ritual or contact within the physical world, but that's not true. **God can work in any way. The Holy Spirit blows where it wills.** The Holy Spirit can use the rituals of even some pagan form of worship—can—doesn't mean necessarily that works or happens very often, but it's possible. And **it's possible for the Holy Spirit to speak directly to the heart of every human being and to guide human beings and to draw out of them the good that is actually basic since we are made in the image and likeness of God.**

**So the life of a Christian is not supposed to be a constant battle.** Yes, the world presents a distortion and it can lead to a distorted way of looking at life. Yes, the devil is a spiritual reality that tries to thwart our path. Yes, we can be weak in our own humanity. But none of these things are really overwhelming; all three put together are not overwhelming. **God's grace is more powerful even if not irresistible. We are free.** God's strength is available to us and to all of us. God's wisdom and God's knowledge and knowledge of the truth is available to all of us. But **we are free to ignore it;** we are free to ignore God. We are free to go our own way. **But we are also free to listen and to follow and to respond.** And that is the world God has made, and that is the world we are part of.