

Flesh versus Spirit Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday, October 17, 2018 **Gal 5:18-25;** Lk 11:42-46 St. Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr
(Through God's Spirit all the good potentials are harmonized, and everything that is possibly evil is kept in check.)

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.”

This is the end of St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians, which we have been reading. He sums up his argument, which is a sort of divisive argument. **He has spent his entire letter contrasting law as a form of enslavement versus faith and grace as forms of freedom.** Now he finishes with contrasting flesh and spirit. We must note that flesh and spirit are not two different components. Flesh is not another word for body; spirit another word for soul, no. **Flesh** is used in different ways in Scripture, sometimes it refers to simply all mortal creatures. But **here it's referring to human life without the higher integration of God consciousness or the consciousness of the indwelling Spirit.**

We are born with many potentials, and they open up at different stages or levels of life, but **eventually we are called to union with God, even now in our lives on earth.** When we are united with God, we can live in the Spirit because **through God's Spirit all the good potentials are harmonized, and everything that is possibly evil is kept in check.** That is living in the Spirit. It is a life of virtue. **Virtue is, as St. Thomas said, a life of the middle,** going to not this extreme or that extreme, but living in moderation, and in every way living out the qualities of God, which are possible because we are made in the image and likeness of God. **Once God's Spirit is united with us and that influences our very being and our very sense of who we are, then we can in fact live out these very high virtues listed here: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.** These qualities belong to the very nature of God and they belong to us in the Spirit.

However without union with God, especially in adult life, we are living with a childish identity, a childish sense of who we are. We are living a life of childish ego. Well children have to have ego to develop, but **for adults to live in the ego is to live in the flesh**; it's not what is intended. And then when we live in the ego, so to speak, the childish ego, **we are defenseless against all of the passions, emotions that exist in us as potential**. They all can be harmonized, but **without the Spirit they are not harmonized**; they all run amok, and they divide us into many different directions, and we have no self-control and no real sense of self on a whole, just this childish little "I." So that's what St. Paul is contrasting here.

Life in the Spirit comes as a gift from God through Christ, who has revealed to us the true nature of God, and who communicates to us the very power of the Holy Spirit as **we are invited into the inner life of the Trinity**.

Now all these other things: religion, law, Torah, all have a place, at least historically they all have had a place, but now **the past has been superseded by the coming of Christ**, by the fullness of life that he bestows.