

## Commentary to the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

The Spirit Fills All the People of God.



When I was in the college seminary, ages ago, one of my philosophy teachers assigned a term paper based on the major work of a philosopher of his choosing. I was given Martin Buber and his book, *I and Thou*. Buber went on to say that this is the type of relationship that God has with each of us. The I and Thou relationship is at its strongest when the Thou is the Eternal Thou. Now Jesus taught that God has a personal love and care for each of us. Jesus taught that God enters the life of all who are open to his love. Buber's philosophy was really very Christian. But how could that be? Martin Buber was Jewish. How could his philosophy contain elements of Christianity? It could be because the Spirit of God, the spirit of Jesus Christ, has saturated the world with the Divine Presence. People like Eldad, Medad, and Martin Buber, who were not in the Catholic meeting tent, still received His Spirit of truth.

A while back I did a study of Dietrick Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran minister serving in Germany in the thirties and early forties. He was one of the few that stood up to Hitler and declared that Hitler's continual attacks on the Jews was immoral. Bonhoeffer refused to mute his teaching. He was arrested, tortured and killed. Was Bonhoeffer a martyr, and therefore is he a saint? Absolutely. But how can that be? Doesn't someone have to be within the Catholic Church to be a saint? Bonhoeffer died rather than compromise his Christianity. He preached truth and was given the courage, the strength, the very voice of the Holy Spirit of Jesus. The Spirit of Jesus that binds the Church into the Body of Christ was certainly poured out upon Dietrick Bonhoeffer, even though this great man was not in the meeting

tent with those who were given the gift of Catholicism.

I have often mentioned Mahatma Gandhi in my homilies. Gandhi was a Hindu and a pagan, but he lived and died for the same principals that Christ proclaimed with his life and death. Can it be that Gandhi received the Holy Spirit even though he did not acknowledge the Spirit or even though he did not recognize the divinity of Jesus Christ? Yes, the Holy Spirit was and is far more powerful than the limits organized religion vainly attempts to place on its scope. Gandhi was like that man in today's Gospel reading who was driving out demons in the name of Jesus even though he was not one of the Twelve. Gandhi manifested the power of Christ even though he was not a disciple of the Lord.

The Christ event was and is so dynamic, so powerful, that the world has been completely transformed by the action of the Lord. When Jesus ascended to the Father, He sent his Holy Spirit to continue His presence. This Spirit of the Father and Son, continues the presence of God throughout the world, and is poured out on all people who are receptive to the Love of God.

It is in this light that we should understand Ecumenism and Inter religious affairs: Christian-Jewish relations, Christian- Moslem, etc. One of the travesties of Ecumenism after the council was that instead of focusing on the mutual truth that flowed from the Spirit, so many ecumenical meetings were reduced to Catholics acting like Protestants and Protestants tolerating Catholics. We Catholics should not and do not apologize for our Catholic beliefs and traditions. We should allow ourselves to be exposed to the working of the Holy Spirit in those outside of Catholicism, but we should not turn from the truth in an effort to formulate some sort of synthetism with non-Catholics. For a Catholic to join another faith, the Catholic would be denying some fundamental Catholic beliefs, for example the real presence of the Lord in the Eucharist, a belief not held by our Protestant brothers and sisters. At the same time, for a Catholic to refuse to recognize that many non-Catholics are performing the work of God would be a denial of the presence of the Spirit working in non-Catholics.

Moses did not tell Joshua to leave the meeting tent and join up with Eldad and Medad, nor did Jesus tell his disciples to leave him and follow the man driving demons out in Jesus' name. However, Moses and Jesus taught their followers and us to recognize the work of God from within and from outside of the immediate community. We treat our non-Catholic brothers and sisters with deep respect because we recognize that God can and does speak through them as he can and does speak through the Roman Catholic Church.

The world is saturated with the Spirit of God. We just need to open our eyes to the good that others are doing to savor the presence of the Spirit around us. At the same time, we need to recognize that the Spirit is moving and active in our own immediate community, and in our own individual families.

If we had a greater awareness of the presence of the Spirit in the world, then we would be at war with those aspects of our society and our lives that reject God's presence.

Today's readings lead us to this simple prayer: May we may be open to the working of the Spirit in our lives and in our world.

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