
Does the Spirit of Optimism Work for You?

A sermon by CanonCarolynne Williams
Proper 12 – Year A

How do you know that the presence of God is within you? What do you do, personally, when circumstances prevail and persist and pull at the very fabric of your beliefs?

Has your faith ever been shaken?

I am not speaking of any circumstance that you are directly responsible for because of your or my will being directly against God's will for us...

I am speaking of life's events. Events that capture the attention of us individually or captures us totally, because of the circumstances in which we find ourselves in the middle of.

Despite our many similarities and our ever-present differences, we as Christians have a common identity.

Your image of God and who God is in your life is important. Being an active participant within humanity being enabled by the Holy Spirit to be who you are draws and calls for authentic living. When we live authentically, then God can and does work with us and through us.

Do we have faith that surpasses all understanding?

As a priest, I must confess that I sometimes become discouraged. Yes. This is a fact. I do become discouraged and question God. When this occurs, I re-examine and retrace my steps in order to determine how I arrived at this particular place on a particular day in my mind and heart. I then spend time in prayer.

After you pray, do you truly stand within your faith by trusting that your prayers have been heard by God?

And if not, what do you do in your moments of weakness that are apparent only to you?

Our Epistle reads: *"The spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the spirit intercedes for the saints, and knows the will of God."* (Romans 8:26-27)

The Spirit knows the will of God.

When we observe and engage in the world around us, there is always the potential for a crisis to come upon us. There is the potential for a crisis to seep into our bones, if we, as Christians, who have faith, are not alert and vigilant.

What do we have to be attentive to? We have to be attentive to our thoughts; we have to be aware of how we enter the world, wherever that may be each day. We have to be awake and aware of everything that we take unto our selves, especially our inner consciousness. The words that we speak to one another always carry some measure of weight. The words that we hear often need filters and our three other senses; tasting, smelling and feeling are constantly being

penetrated. This affects the spirit. This creates a spiritual hunger within us. Also, people hunger for a release from oppression, boredom, and lifelessness.

The spirit plays a decisive role in building up the body of Christ, the church.

"It was in one spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13) The Creed, pg. 236."

Paul emphasizes that the spirit is the principal of unity within the Christian community, making all of its members one in Christ without destroying their individuality.

The letter to the Romans tells us that we are being led "by the Spirit of God" into our true identity as , "Children of God" (Romans 8:14). "The journey toward our true identity is not a solo spiritual pilgrimage".

"Mutuality, not individuality, lies at the heart of the Christian promise for this world and the world to come." Hope for the World, pg. 63 Rev.Dr. Joanna Adams.

"Hope" is at the center of all that we have for ourselves individually and for the communities of all descriptions where we live and move and have our being.

Romans reads, "If God is for us, who is against us?" Well, it depends upon who you listen to and what day of the week you are listening or speaking.

The bottom line of all that is happening in this complex world, is this: We are not in this world alone, and yet we have a responsibility as one human being to another to be vigilant, be awake and continue our involvement in all that you and I are involved in, but the utmost action is to pray. Pray within community, pray within oneself, pray into eternity, because the Spirit will and does intercede.

Scripture tells us that the Spirit prays for us and within us when we cannot pray for ourselves.

According to Dr. Adams:

"The function of the spirit is not now and never has been to give us what we want or to whisk us away from this wretched, wretched world; it is to fit us for life and witness in this world, for which the Son of God lived and died."

The spirit teaches us to ground our hope in the new reality that is renewed every day though our faith in God.

Hope gives us a newness through our refreshment, intention of spirit and love.

A spirit of love makes a tremendous difference in our lives. If you don't know it try it sometime. Even when you are not in the frame of love to care or to acquiesce. Try moving to a place of gratitude. That works wonders especially when it is difficult to love. Summer time brings about all manner of evil and more importantly good.

When I sometimes become discouraged as a priest, I retrace my steps. I look at the possibilities of why I am discouraged. When I hear how one person talks to another or how one person treats another human being, those actions carry the possibility of being discouraging. Those actions carry the potential of troubling my spirit. After I have examined all possibilities that my gray matter will allow in a particular circumstance, I pray and remember God's promise to me. You see there is a big difference between optimism and faith.

There is nothing wrong with optimism. Joy is wonderful. We all experience joy and being joyful. Hope keeps going us going as a people. However, Faith in the one true God is steadfast and never failing. It is a promise that is given to those who trust in God's word through one's faith.

Having gratitude each day empowers us to be present and aware of the spirit within us which enables us to strive to serve Christ daily in our tasks and to live joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth.

The love of God through all of our days proposes a hermeneutic of trust.

Not a casual or shallow trust of any person or proposition that comes along, but a deep trust and hard won trust, a knowing that is born of being loved and of loving in return.

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Paul has said to us in Romans, that the love of the one true God, "this love cuts across the dark intervals of meaning, reaches into the depths of human despair, embraces those who live in the shadow of death or the over bright light of present life, challenges the rulers of the world.... and looks at the world with, literally, a clear faith and embraces the future with hope and understands that God is God above all Gods.

His son Jesus is the Messiah and the Holy Spirit prays for us with sighs too deep for words. God searches the heart, knows the mind of the spirit, because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The parable of the fish being gathered in the net is the parable that I connected with in this gospel. The other parables are of note. The good and the evil being gathered, I connected with. When it is all said and done, the good and the evil will be gathered together in God's time. God will separate the good from the evil. God is the judge on the direction of all.

It is our responsibility to determine which group we plan to be in. The good will be separated from the evil in *God's time*. While you and I are building our relationship with God, let us be mindful of the promise to all who will hear.

The choice is ours as to whether we will trust in our optimism and good luck or if we will stand upon our faith in the one true God.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Absolutely nothing!

Amen.