

Today's readings address an age old problem, namely our spiritual blindness, by which I mean our inability to recognise the work of the Holy Spirit in others. This blindness has led to the common mentality of sticking too much to religious rules and regulation and habits and rejecting anything and anybody whose faith activities do not obviously fit into the framework of such religious traditions, rules and regulations.

This is what happens in the first reading where we hear that God takes some of His Spirit from Moses and gives it to a group of 70 elders who then prophesy once, but there are another two elders who do not go to the Tent of the Covenant for the ceremony to receive the same Spirit, so they are not supposed to have received from the Spirit of Moses, and yet they also prophesy. However, just because they were not publically authorised by God their prophetic work is rejected by Joshua, the military leader of the Jewish people. He shows the mentality of people, including us, who only follow commands, rules, traditions and regulations. Yet, Moses, who has a close relationship with the God of Israel is not spiritually blind, and knows that the prophesying of these two elders is the work of the same Spirit that is in him. Those who have the same Spirit in them recognise the work of the same Spirit in others. Those for whom only the letter and traditions matter are blind spiritually, because they do not want to look beyond the physical letter and recognise the flow of grace, the work of the Holy Spirit, which goes well beyond the limitations of religious traditions, customs and writings. There is for example the charismatic way of praise and worship, which is rejected or dismissed by some Catholics and yet it is often the work of the Holy Spirit. So we should focus more on what we receive through the Ten Commandment and our religious customs and regulations and help the flow of God's grace both in ourselves and in others who are entrusted to our spiritual care, like our spouses, children, friends and even colleagues.

In the Gospel reading we hear that the disciples want to stop someone from casting out devils in Jesus' name, just because they are not part of their group. This is clearly club or elite mentality. Focusing on status, ie. on being part of the chosen 12 makes the disciples blind to recognising the work of the Holy Spirit in those who are outside the 'club'. Jesus points out to them that those who carry out an important ministry in His name will surely not go against Him, if the same Holy Spirit works in them as in those who are inside the chosen ones. Therefore to do something in the name of Jesus is by the power of the Holy Spirit is far more important than simply being in the club of the chosen ones.

I like what Moses says: 'If only the whole people of the Lord were prophets and the Lord gave his spirit to them all!' It's brilliant. If the whole people of the Church were prophets and the Lord gave his Spirit to them all! How lively the Catholic Church would be! So, let's not stifle the flow of grace in those who try to carry out the work of the Holy Spirit, but find out if it is the work of the Holy Spirit and let them do what the Spirit prompts them to do.

How do you know if it is the Holy Spirit who works in someone. One of the great signs is humility and obedience to Church authorities, and then you know the Holy Spirit's presence also by His fruits that this person shows, namely love, joy, peace patience, kindness goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Additional part to my homily:

There are other false ways of mentality that can make us spiritually blind: 1. Having a divisive mentality— eg. judgmental negativity, materialism, superficiality. People who suffer from these are unwilling to focus on the spiritual goods in each other and on the unifying work of the Holy Spirit between us. 2. Spiritual comfort seeking, which is a result of getting into repetitive religious habits and rejecting any efforts to get out of the habit in order to further mature spiritually. Religious habits for them becomes more important than the Holy Spirit's efforts to make us spiritually grow and mature all throughout our lives, therefore they reject or simply ignore those through whom the Holy Spirit challenges them to grow and mature spiritually. 3. Reluctance to increase our spiritual

focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in each other. I know from experience that when I focus on what the Holy Spirit is trying to do in someone else's life I become more careful with what I say to the person and make more spiritual efforts to say what helps the work of the Holy Spirit in this person's progress.

Finally hiding from God makes us spiritually blind. In one way or another we are still hiding spiritually and mentally before God, like Adam and Eve, namely we do not dare to be spiritually naked before God, because of our sins and because of being afraid that God will judge us and accuse us of hypocrisy for calling ourselves Christians and yet being sinful at the same time. Yet, if you would come out of spiritual hiding and would reveal it before God or His representative you would see that God's word comes alive and speaks to you more clearly.

Let's remember that we are God's beloved children, he knows everything about us, but He is much more merciful and loving than you can imagine, but you can see that only when you come out of hiding. Confession is a good opportunity for that, but also an examination of conscience before Mass, or a confidential talk with a God loving close friend whom you trust, and then you will see much more clearly God's work in another person.