

20 July 2021

***Galatians 5.22-26***

*22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.*

*[Jesus said,] “You will know them by their fruits.” — Matthew 7.16a*



*Jesus answered [Nicodemus], “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. — John 3.3,5*

*For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. — Romans 14.17*

With the Olympics soon approaching we’re mindful of athletes who through natural talent, a fortunate body composition for their particular sport, and then the necessary grit, determination, practice, and sacrifice, make it to Tokyo. As we marvel at their speed and strength and skill, we imagine the hours of practice, strength, cardio, and balance training, and disciplined diet (not to mention sound coaching and financial backing) to make success a reality.

If we apply this regimen to being a disciple (a word connected to *discipline*, after all), we might assume it’s up to us to do the work in order to improve spiritually, or be “spiritual” at all. But the *fruit* metaphor Paul uses suggests that these are *outcomes* of a tree firmly planted, receiving sun and water and what ever else is required for its growth. And when growth occurs, the tree bears fruit. We are to be trees planted — God waters and gives the growth. The fruit of the Spirit is not an accomplishment, but the natural outgrowth of being grounded in love. And what is

this fruit? It is “being spiritual,” which surprisingly means being *fully human*. This is a list of qualities God has created *us* to be...to be fully human *together*.

One long-time metaphor for the church people gathered in a boat, crossing to distant shores, welcoming others and caring for any in need. Does the church travel by a team of oarsmen and women, or might we put up the sails and let the Spirit’s power guide us to “the promised land”? The Spirit is life in the future, the future breaking into our present life and world.

It sounds easy enough, until we get to verse 24, where Paul notes that the sails go up when our own passions and desires (our selfishness) go down. In fact, they’re crucified — the presence of the Spirit is the death of the old, the birth of the new. It is what we witness with every baptism, where the Holy Spirit gives new birth — given individually for the purpose of our life together,

We live in a culture that celebrates individual achievement, but Paul’s words direct us to how to be a *community* united in love — a love given to us, the love that empowers us, a love that disciplines us as we keep practicing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. We practice together: developing relationships of mutual respect and concern, encouraging one another, forgiving one another in love, and then going out back into our lives and into the world, knowing we are not alone, but Jesus is with us, in Spirit, and in the community of faith we call the church.

—Pastor Peter

**Prayer:** *Spirit of rest and renewal, when the concerns of the world overwhelm, remind us of your presence, give us your wisdom, and lead us to those places where we can be a people of service, gentleness, peace and love. Amen.*

### **Music Link:**

***Veni Sancte Spiritus*** (*Come, Holy Spirit*) — Words based on Acts 11; tune 1978 by Jacques Berthier (1923-1974), sung by the Taizé Community. This Taizé hymn is in our ELW (one of six). These hymns are typically sung in a repeated style, fostering a contemplative spirit. Taizé is an ecumenical monastic community of over 100 brothers from 20 countries in southern France, founded in 1944 by Brother Roger Schütz, a Reformed Protestant. Taizé welcomes visitors from around the world, especially younger adults, attracting over 100,000 each year.

*Come, Holy Spirit, from heaven shine forth with your glorious light.  
Veni Sancte Spiritus...*

*Come, Father of the poor, come, generous Spirit,  
come, light of our hearts.*

*Come from the four winds, O Spirit, come breath of God;  
disperse the shadows over us, renew and strengthen your people.*

*Most kindly warming light! Enter the inmost depths of our hearts,  
for we are faithful to you.  
Without your presence we have nothing worthy, nothing pure.*

*You are only comforter, peace of the soul.  
In the heat you shade us; in our labour you refresh us,  
and in trouble you are our strength.*

*On all who put their trust in you and receive you in faith,  
shower all your gifts.  
Grant that they may grow in you and persevere to the end.  
Give them lasting joy!*

*Artwork: Veni Sancte Spiritus by Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P. (O.P. stands for “Order of Preachers,” aka the Dominican Order.)*