

## *The Fruit-filled life of the Holy Spirit.*

Homily for October 14<sup>th</sup> 2020

Isn't the fruit listed here enticing? We all want more peace, patience, and self-control. But just as in nature, the fruit of the Spirit is the product of a long growth process. An orange ripens slowly, from flower to bud to mature citrus. It takes time for the water, light, and heat to bring it to its fullest growth. So too with the fruit of the Spirit. Few people proceed directly from furious outbursts to unflappable self-control or from envy to the unshakeable peace of Christ. God knows that, and he is infinitely patient as his fruit in us matures.

Who better to water your thirsty spirit than God? As you spend time with him in prayer, he pours out—rather, he generously drenches you—with his love. That love acts as water, softening the soil of your heart to receive the seeds of the fruit he wants to grow in you. Daily, receive the gentle sprinkling of his love. Though perhaps you don't notice it happening at first, over time your heart will become arable and fertile.

Along with water, the fruit of the Spirit in you needs light. As you read Scripture or hear it proclaimed at Mass, the Holy Spirit shines the light of Christ into your heart and mind. Read slowly. Listen intently. Allow God's word of truth to shine as fully as possible in you. Read a spiritual book occasionally, or the writings of holy men and women, lives of the saints, or reflections by wise authors. Underline or note the things in them that stir your heart. Spend time quietly basking in the light of the words that strike you.

And heat. Fruit ripens in heat. In your life, that heat might be illness, sorrows, or difficulties of some kind. It might be stress or uncertainty or loneliness. It might be that irritating habit of your spouse or the continual criticism of a coworker. But you have been—you are being—watered by the love of God. He will always sustain you through the heat in your life. Though uncomfortable, perhaps even painful or seemingly unbearable, the heat will in time bring forth fruit. Christ is in you. Let him bear fruit in your life!<sup>1</sup>

And please notice this. Paul does not speak of the “fruits” of the Spirit, as if these are nine different fruits, but the “fruit” of the Spirit. This is the multidimensional life of the maturing Christian:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wau.org/meditations/2020/10/14/176674/>

- *love, joy, peace*,: this is the internal disposition the Lord wants to shape in our lives, like the seeds of the orange
- *patience, kindness, generosity*: this is like the flesh of the orange and represents the way a person relates to others, who is growing in the life of the spirit
- **faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control**: These characteristics represent how fruitfulness is cultivated in our lives so that we are living purposefully.

How different is the spirit formed life from the legalistically formed life of the religious leaders whom Jesus challenges in today's gospel. How different is the Spirit formed life from the flesh formed life of which Paul speaks, earlier in today's reading.

To grow in the life of the Holy Spirit allows us to see how in the words of our Psalm:

*Happy are those whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law they meditate day and night.  
<sup>3</sup> They are like trees  
planted by streams of water,  
which yield their fruit in its season,  
and their leaves do not wither.  
In all that they do, they prosper.<sup>2</sup>*

Such is the prosperity of those who are indeed growing in the life of the Spirit.

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<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition\*](#). (1993). (Ps 1:1–3). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.