

Readings: *Lectionaries provide a wide range of readings for this Solemnity – but all agree that the passage from Acts (2: 1 – 11) **must** be read.*

*This Reflection takes **Romans: 8 – 17** as its starting point.*

In this passage Saint Paul provides one of the greatest New Testament expositions of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christians. Unfortunately, I find the Jerusalem Bible version (printed in the missal) unsatisfactory. A literal translation of the first words of the reading would be “those in the flesh are not able to please God”. In an attempt to avoid the difficulty of the word “flesh”, the Jerusalem Bible says *People who are interested only in unspiritual things*. This suggests a merely theoretical interest, as do the words in the next verse: *Your interests are...in the spiritual*. But Paul isn't talking about what people are interested in: he is describing two opposing powers, which may control the whole of a person's life.

The first of these powers is the flesh, by which Paul doesn't mean what the JB version calls *the misdeeds of the body*, but “a mind from which God is excluded” (CK Barrett's commentary) – so by definition it *can never be pleasing to God*.

The second of these opposed powers is the Spirit of God, who, Paul writes, *has made his home in you*. This must be true of each Christian or else they *would not belong to Christ*.

Two things follow from our belonging to Christ and having the Spirit within us:

First, “the body is dead” – “body” here means the natural self. This is dead, because it has died to sin with Christ in baptism (as Paul has taught in chapter six which we hear at the Easter Vigil).

But, secondly, “the Spirit is life because we *have been justified*” – that is, put in a right relationship with God. “Spirit” here means the Spirit of God, not, as JB suggests, *your spirit*. It is the Spirit of God who is, as we say in the Creed, *the giver of life*.

The outcome of these two truths is that *he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you*.

So, between our baptism and the end of our mortal lives, we are under obligation, not to “the flesh” – that is to “a mind from which God is excluded” – but to the working of the Spirit within us.

It is this working of the Spirit in us which makes us children of God, sharers in the Sonship of Christ, co-heirs with him, called to share both in his sufferings and in his glory.