

*[Fr. Mark is holding in front of him a board with cards hanging on it spelling the words EVIL WON.]*

Week if you heard the sermon, you'll might remember St. Paul was talking in that passage powerfully of his own experience of sin, a force which he knew to be at work only too strongly in his own life. And he left that passage with a question, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

Of course, the answer to that question is Jesus Christ. He knew very well that Jesus freed him from that body of death, the same Jesus who tasted death on Good Friday on the cross. But we know that Good Friday was not the end of the story, that Easter day came, that the bonds of death could not hold Jesus, that he won a great victory, a victory in which we can share.

As St. Paul writes in this passage, "He who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal body." We too, like St. Paul, can know that Jesus Christ can rescue us from this body of death. We too can share Christ's risen life. Evil has not won. It has been overcome. *[Fr. Mark turns the board 180 degrees, the letters now read NOW LIVE.]*

So the call on us is to now live. St. Paul invites us to live a new life, to live a new resurrection life, a life that's different from the old life of sin and death. And I want to go on now and draw out three characteristics of this new resurrection life. But first let me put this down here...*[He lays the board aside and returns to the lectern.]*

So, three characteristics of this new resurrection life. The first is that this is a life lived in the Spirit. The Spirit dominates this great chapter. Romans chapter eight, in St. Paul's writings. In the first seven chapters, there's just one or two references to the Holy Spirit. But here in this great eighth chapter, there are over 20 references to the Spirit, packed together, as Paul explores what it means to live the life in the Spirit.

"We live and walk according to the Spirit," Paul says, "not according to the flesh." And the word that St. Paul uses here for "Spirit" is related to an Old Testament word, the Hebrew word, "ruach", which means strong breath or blast.

In the Old Testament, every time someone did something beyond their normal capacity, it was said a divine strong breath had come upon them and empowered them.

So by drawing on that tradition, what Paul is talking about here is of a divine Spirit that breaks into human experience against which the flesh is powerless. What we celebrated at the feet of Pentecost just a few weeks ago was the fact that God gives his Holy Spirit now to all his people.

God dwells within us by his Spirit. We walk in company with God. In chapter five of this Book of Romans, Paul says, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

The Holy Spirit animates sustains, directs and enriches our walk with God. Dorothy Day, the journalist, was asked once to write a memoir. She replied, "I have tried. I sat there and thought of Jesus and his visit amongst us all those centuries ago, and my great luck to have had him in my life for so long."

Dorothy Day knew that the Holy Spirit of God dwelt within her and she was deeply blessed by God's empowering presence in her life.

The second characteristic of life in the Spirit I want to mention is that this spiritual life is the life in all its fullness that Jesus himself talked about. You might remember, he said to the disciples, "I come that they might have life, life in all its abundance."

The Spirit-filled life is that abundant life of which Jesus spoke. Saint Irenaeus said this, "The glory of God is someone fully alive, someone living that rich, fulfilled, abundant life." And we can only know that we could only be fully alive when we've been

enlivened by the Spirit of God dwelling within us. Without the Spirit, we're living life in black-and-white. When the Spirit comes, we can experience life in glorious Technicolor. And of course, the life that St. Paul is writing about here has an eternal dimension.

The resurrection life of the Spirit carries on beyond the grave. Brother Roger of Taizé, he said this "Love life on earth and long for a life beyond, for life that will never end."

The final characteristic of this new life I want to mention, is peace. St. Paul says in verse six, "To set the mind on the flesh is death. But to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace."

He talks elsewhere of the peace that comes with God, as we are reconciled to God. And note how he begins this chapter. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." But I don't think that he's just talking here about the peace that we can have with God as we're reconciled to him.

I think too, he's talking here about peace within, the kind of peace which Jesus offered to his disciples when he said, "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you", the peace that St. Paul says will guard our hearts and our minds. We all need that peace, especially now, when everything and everyone is so churned up.

There's a story of a ship that was wrecked in a furious storm, and the only survivor was that little boy who was swept into the waves and managed to swim onto a rock. And he sat on the rock all night long until the next morning when he was spotted and rescued. And his rescuer said to him, "Did you tremble on that rock in the night?" "Yes." Said the boy. "I trembled all night, but the rock didn't."

As we live the life of the Spirit, our peace comes not from everything around us staying the same and being on troubled, but rather from the fact

that God, by his Spirit, dwells within us. He is constant and unchanging.

At this time when all our lives have been changed and constrained in so many ways, let's look to live out our spiritual lives, to the full and enjoy the abundance and the peace that that life in the Spirit brings. Now live.

Amen.