

Homily: 13th Sunday Cycle C: 2022: 1 Kgs 19: 16b, 19-21; Ps 16; Gal 1, 13-18; Lk 9: 51-62

“The Spirit vs. the Flesh in everyday life”

All humans have a battle that we face, whether we acknowledge it or not, namely, **the battle between the flesh and the spirit**. The ultimate goal of the Christian spiritual life is to integrate the two: our bodily nature and our spiritual nature or soul with God’s grace through the working of the Holy Spirit transforming us more and more into the image of Jesus in all that *we say and think and do*. What are the essential ways we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in bringing about this transformation in holiness? The readings today show us some of the main ways to grow.

1. **Holy Detachment:** In the first reading we hear about the great prophet Elijah and God asking him to anoint Elisha as his successor as the main prophet in Israel in a time of great spiritual desolation and unfaithfulness to God. When Elijah encountered Elisha **a particular challenge** was faced by Elisha: *he was too attached in the present to his family to be able to carry out the special mission as a prophet*. But when Elijah challenged him and told him to go back, the grace of God kicked in and Elisha was open to it, and so kissed his father and mother good-bye and followed Elijah as an apprentice prophet. The Lord calls all of us to be detached from other people if it prevents us from loving God with our whole being; or if he is calling us to a special mission in our time as a priest or religious: we freely give up being married and having a family of our own on the natural level, so we can have God as our sole portion who fulfills us in our heart and soul as we beget children spiritually rather than naturally. If we are in the married life, obviously we are to strive to have a great love for our spouse and children which comes naturally on the level of the flesh as the two become one, but we have to pray that we love them even more on a spiritual level – which includes calling both ourselves and them to a greater holiness, and loving them through the love in our heart for God.
2. **Freedom:** What do we use it for? To serve the flesh or the spirit? *Being truly free to make choices in life is one of the main ways we are made in God’s image as humans*. What do we use our freedom for? To grow in goodness or in evil? We got some very good news yesterday as followers of God when the Supreme Court overruled the horrible Roe vs. Wade decision from 1973 and said yesterday there is no right to abortion in the

US Constitution, and that the Supreme Court at the time just basically made that up to please our modern sexually decadent society. Now the States will have to decide what they stand for in terms of the protection of human life – we need to work in PA because we have very liberal abortion laws at present thru 24 weeks. It's just a start what happened yesterday, as someday hopefully all human life is actually protected in all laws from conception to natural death: *to change our culture from one that sees death as a solution to embracing the gift of human life and helping everyone to choose life especially in difficult circumstances*. But it's consoling to see good triumph over evil in this world, at least once in a while! And it was not an accident in God's holy Providence that this overturning of Roe came down on **the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus** *which is the symbol of both His love and sorrow for the human race immersed in sin, evil and spiritual slavery, and also by turning to Him in trust, He will heal us of those things*.

3. **In the Holy Spirit:** As St. Paul repeatedly points out in his letters in the NT the great battle in the human person is between settling to live in our fallen nature which is our default position vs. putting in the spiritual work to live in the new life of the Spirit which Jesus won for us on the Cross and gives to us by daily graces and the Sacraments – if we open to it. Two areas of concern in this regard are: anger and purity. You take notice in our culture the main secular marches are always dealing with abortion, gay rights, etc. and in a spirit of anger and pride and lewdness rules the day. **Showing anger does not reflect God's holiness** as Jesus points out to James and John in the Gospel today. The reason being is our anger is usually rooted in the flesh, i.e., our fallen nature, *in that we want what we want in a selfish way, or want to see immediate punishment on those who offend us*. In contrast we who are believers in the living God are to be people of **peace and joy and mercy and charity**. It doesn't mean we don't stand up for what's right - see the March for Life for many years - full not of anger and hatred but rather of prayer and charity- with some rare exception of believers who let their anger get the best of them. How can we help change those who don't see the gift of human life and of human sexuality rooted in God's vision of life and love? **Prayer and penance for conversion of souls**. It's not enough to feel bad for people or get upset, we need to counter evil with good. To know what is going on in the world within reason, so we can pray/do penance.