

Friend and Protector

"Although the Holy Spirit never changes, the effects of His actions, by the Will of God and in the name of Christ are both many and marvelous."
(St. Cyril)

I have always been fascinated by the catechetical instructions of this fourth-century Jerusalem bishop. They give an illuminating picture of the preparation for baptism in use in the early church. Here are two sections I found interesting:



"The Spirit makes one man a teacher of divine truth, inspires another to prophesy, enables another to interpret Holy Scripture."

DOES THIS MEAN that some teachers of divine truth are not able to interpret Scripture? In a sense, yes the deposit of faith has been clarified down through the ages through hard-fought theological debates, with opposite sides interpreting Scriptures in different ways. The magisterium settles the dispute with an authoritative pronouncement and we move on to the next debate.

"The Spirit strengthens one man's self control, shows another how to help the poor, teaches another to fast and lead a life of asceticism, makes another oblivious to the needs of the body, trains another for martyrdom. His action is different in different people."

Does this mean that some people who manifest holiness by helping the poor are not given self-control, or that those who live a monastic life are not ready for martyrdom? Here we must be careful because generalizations are misleading, but yes, some people are given extraordinary graces for one form of service and others are not.

It's possible to be weak in some areas of life and strong in others, in fact it is quite common.

I KNOW MANY who are engaged in charitable works but who are weak in other areas. Their own human weakness has sensitized them to the needs of others. Even

though they may not have their own act together, in terms of self-control, they perform noble works because the Holy Spirit is alive in them.

The Spirit lives in all by grace, even the unrepentant whom He calls to repentance. He is certainly in the weak who keep trying.

So sinners take heart. Never be discouraged if you are struggling with some problem. God will heal you in His good time and make you strong in other ways. You may not possess all the gifts of the Spirit right now, but you can pray for them with confidence.

As St. Cyril of Jerusalem put it, "The Spirit comes with the tenderness of a true friend and protector, to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen, and to console."