

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

JESUS AND THE LIVING SPIRIT

By David C. Robinson, SJ

Excerpts from Today's First Reading and Gospel

While there is jealousy and rivalry among you, are you not of the flesh, and walking according to the manner of man? Whenever someone says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely men? What is Apollos, after all, and what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, just as the Lord assigned each one.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:3-5

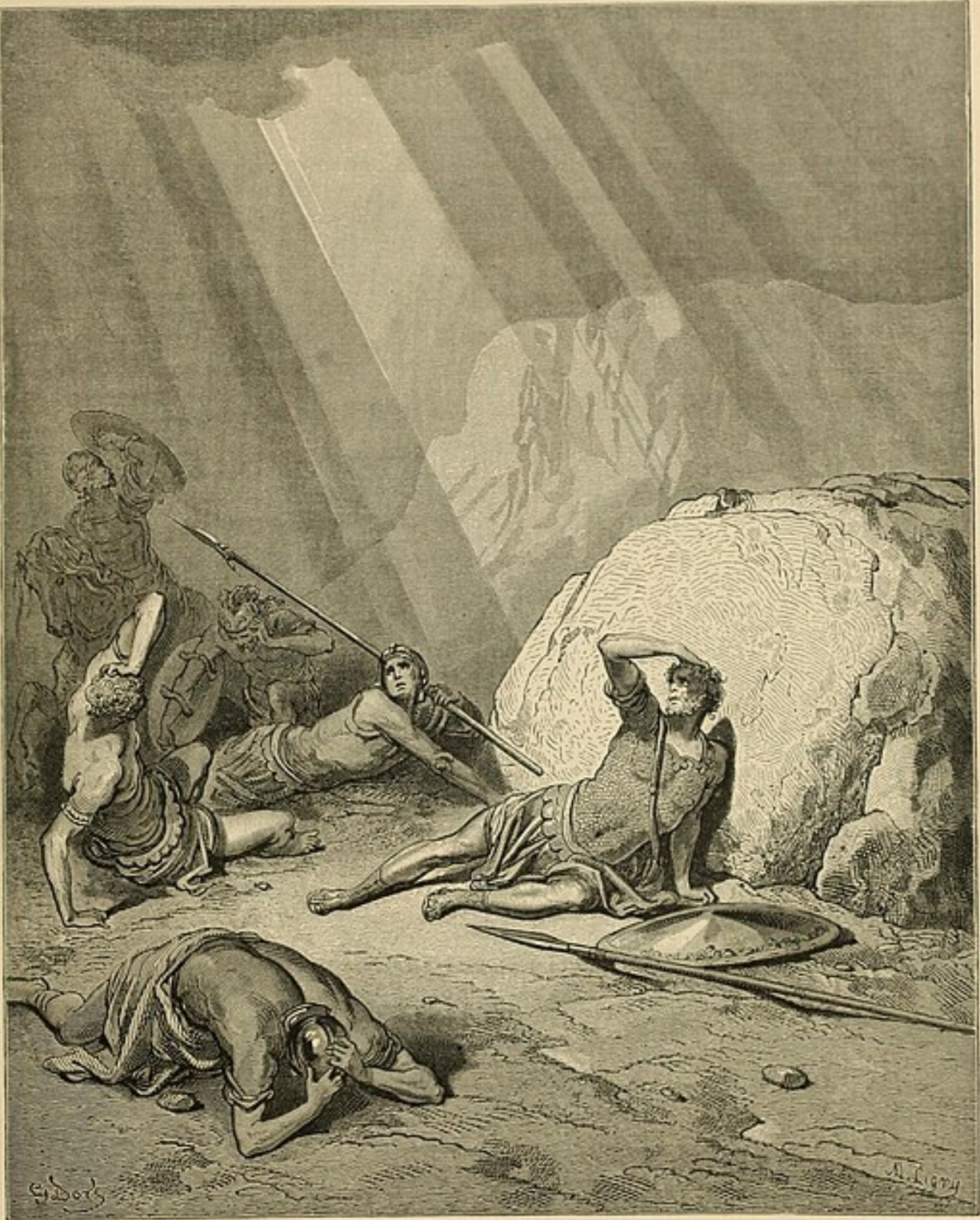
At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them. And demons also came out from many, shouting, "You are the Son of God." But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ. ... And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

LUKE 4:40-41, 44

Reflection

In his epistles to the Corinthians, Paul urges them to remain faithful to the gospel truths that had come to them. He places a strong emphasis on the moral obligations of Christian life in all things. However, at the heart of his message is a fervent call for them to live in the wisdom of the Spirit, putting aside 'jealousies and rivalries' to receive their authentic calling in God. Forming factions about 'belonging' to Paul or Apollos leads to division and resentment that destroy the integrity of the community. Paul exhorts all to submit to the authority of the Spirit, leading to humility, compassion, and the guidance of God's loving presence. He is only too well aware of the arrogance which can accompany a faith stance built upon rigid adherence to legal mandates and fixed rituals. His own career as a Pharisee had been filled with self-important religiosity and malicious attacks against the emerging Christian communities. His conversion is a compelling example of the way in which surrender to the Spirit can totally redirect a life from a focus on religious supremacy to the grateful humility of a soul united with God's loving wisdom.

Jesus' sojourn in Capernaum symbolizes the range of the power the Spirit brings to life and to ministry. The crowds recognize the authority of his preaching, which elicits attention far beyond the impact of mere rhetoric. His voice incarnates the vital connection of God with the soul, and the intimate communion of Spirit with the yearnings of the heart. In addition, his words are a conduit of healing power, releasing the sick and afflicted from what has held them captive. In his life of teaching and healing, Jesus manifests the commingling of tenderness and strength, loving presence and compelling authority. He is the fullness of the Godly reality he bequeaths to the disciples to carry to their families of faith.



The Conversion of St. Paul by Gustave Doré
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For Pondering

- How have you experienced the gentle Spirit of Jesus in moments of distress or uncertainty?
- Have you recognized the power of the Spirit in your life when you had to commit to a difficult decision?

- Have you experienced moments when you speak with an authority that is not your own, but seems to come from God's inspiration?

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