

Twenty years ago, when I first finished up school (for the first time), I kept aquariums. Not just a little fish bowl, but a seventy gallon aquarium.

An interesting thing about fish is, that when you move a fish from a smaller aquarium to a larger aquarium ... it's almost as if it doesn't notice. It swims up to a point, and then turns away and keeps on as if it's still in the smaller aquarium.

Depending on the fish, this can take a while before it realizes that it's not cooped up in the smaller tank.

In today's Gospel, Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me ...  
to proclaim liberty to captives ...  
sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.*

Now this is a beautiful passage, and beautiful imagery. And the images it may bring up in our minds are people in fluorescent jumpers with numbers stenciled on the backs ... right? ... prisoners. And people with white canes and leaders dogs ... right? ... blind. And people under the rule of some petty dictator half a world away ... right? ... oppressed.

But quoting the famous cook, Emeril, let's take it up a notch.

In the letter of John, we hear:

*Beloved, we love God because [God] first loved us.  
...  
Whoever loves God must also love his [sister and his] brother.*

And it seems that the connection between the two readings is that we who are *begotten by God* in Christ must take the limits off of the way we love. Our own love needs to reflect the infinite love we have received from God.

Our lives and our actions need to break out of the habits or patterns we have acquired and take on the life and action of someone *begotten by God* ... in Christ ... and full of the Spirit.

We may not even notice it. But we can ask: How have we held love captive by only loving "these" people but not "those" people? Have we been blind to places where we may be called to bring God's love? Have we held back on loving as God would have us love?

The Spirit of God ... the love of God ... has been entrusted to us. Not as a prisoner, not to be held back ... but to be given freely ... without limits.

If we, who are *begotten by God* in Christ and full of God's Spirit, are to show God's love to a world hungry for love, then we need to ask for the grace to love more like how God loves ... in the places where God's love needs to be brought ... without limits ... without conditions ... outside of our habits and patterns.

Because, as the letter of John says:

*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God,  
...  
[And] whoever is begotten by God conquers the world.*

And so, in Christ's love, filled with the Spirit of God, let us go out and conquer the world ... with love.