

**Homily for Day 2 of WUCWO General Assembly, Dakar.
Wednesday 17 October,**

**DISCERNING THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, AND BUILDING THE
KINGDOM OF GOD (GALATIANS 5, 18-25)**

Would you call yourself a discerning person? When you are making important decisions in your life, do you ask yourself if you are following the will of God? Do you feel you know when you are doing the will of God? And, then, let me widen the question. Would you describe your national organization as a discerning organization? Do you try to study the signs of the times in your country and find a way to respond as organized Catholic women?

In the first reading, St. Paul is doing his best to teach the Christian community of Galatians how to become discerning individuals and a discerning community. He warns them against understanding their religion in a legalistic manner. He uses irony to tease the legalistic Galatians, he says the Holy Spirit guides us to behave in such a loving way that we go beyond what any law can force us to do. See if you recognize the irony in this following statement: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” In the Gospel we find Jesus making this point even more strongly, but this time, without a sense of humor! Speaking to the legalistic leaders of the Jews, he says, “Woe to you Pharisees!” and “Woe to you scholars of the law!”

So, what does it mean for us today, as members of WUCWO at our General Assembly, to hear the call of today’s readings to let ourselves be guided by the spirit and become a discerning community? I don’t think that the problem of legalism is as much our problem today as it was for the early Christians who had recently converted from Judaism. However, I believe that there is still a challenge for us and our organizations to be truly able to listen to the signs of the times and find creative ways of responding to them. Here, I believe Pope Francis is a good teacher for us. This Pope is trying to help the whole Church to become more discerning, more attentive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and more creative in the pastoral decisions we make. In fact, we can recall that at present, a big event is happening in Rome, the Synod of Bishops on Young People. Let us listen to the advice of the Holy Father to the bishops and take it as advice also for us:

The Synod is an ecclesial exercise in discernment. To speak frankly and listen openly are fundamental if the Synod is to be a process of discernment. Discernment is ... based on the conviction that God is at work in world history, in life’s events, in the people I meet and who speak to me. For this reason, we are called to listen to what the Spirit suggests to us

The pope also adds that careful discerning should lead to action. Let us pray that we in WUCWO may advance from our study days to our Statutory days and to make good decisions for the next mandate of WUCWO. Let us remember that it is God’s work we are trying to do. So, let us make the prayer the Pope offers for the synod our own prayer also:

Let us therefore work to “spend time with the future” . . . to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from

one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands, and inspire in young people”

As St. Paul would say, “there is no law against that!”

Readings:

- First reading: Gal. 5:18-25
- Psalm 1:1-2.3.4.6
- Gospel: Luk. 11:42-46