

30. September 2025  
FIRST LETTER OF ST. JOHN  
Test the spirits

1 Jn 4:1-6

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already. Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them. We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

In a time when the anti-Christian spirit is manifesting itself strongly in the world, whether in preparation for the coming of the Antichrist or through his direct presence, discernment of spirits is probably one of the most important aspects of Christian life. This becomes even more urgent when we realise that the faithful are hardly receiving clear guidance from the decisive positions of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The *sensus fidei* (sense of faith) has also been weakened by the long-term influence of modernism.

However, if we adhere to the true faith, without adulteration, and try to live by it, we can affirm St John's words in today's passage: *"Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"*.

We could say that anyone who bears witness to the truth and proclaims it has already embarked on the victorious struggle against heresy. The devil uses half-truths to deceive. This is why some heresies are so dangerous. Without a firm grounding in sound doctrine, one may be led astray by a new path that presents itself, since it also contains some true statements. However, we know that the devil himself spoke half-truths when he tried to tempt Jesus by quoting Scripture but applying it to the wrong context (cf. Mt 4:1–11). The unadulterated truth is the weapon with which to counter such attacks.

This is why we must be guided by the Spirit of the Lord and not by the mentality of the world, as today's passage insists. As soon as the Church adopts the mentality of the world, she loses her prophetic power and becomes penetrated by the worldly spirit. Thus, it may even happen that preachers and leaders end up becoming false prophets. Not only do they fail in their duty to guide the faithful on the right path and warn them of seductions, but they may even deceive them. This happens because they listen to the spirit of the Antichrist, which is present in the world.

The world, for its part, always wants to hear what pleases it, what flatters it, and what it identifies with. Therefore, it is a serious and almost irreparable mistake to believe that, when proclaiming the Gospel, one must adapt to the mentality of the world and lower the demands to the point that everyone can accept it. If this happens, the salt loses its taste (cf. Mt 5:13).

Something entirely different is trying to bear witness to the Gospel through our entire way of life, practising Christian virtues and allowing the gifts of the Holy Spirit to unfold within us. This will, in turn, affect the way we transmit the Gospel. The more love grows within us — and thus God's presence — the more we will overcome the attitudes that hinder the reception of the message, such as impatience, the desire to always be right, unnecessary arguments and everything that stems more from our passions than from the Spirit of the Lord.

The more we allow ourselves to be formed by Him internally, the wiser we will become in dealing with those to whom we want to convey the message of salvation. We will more easily recognise when it is time to speak and when it is better to remain silent, allowing what has been said to sink in.

However, this will not lead us to be governed by the spirit of the world, nor will it make us remain silent out of human respect when it is time to bear witness. It is also important to perceive when it is pointless to continue speaking because the doors of the heart are not open to receive the Lord's message. In these cases, no form of violence should be used. At such times, the words of St John apply: *"Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us."*

The truth speaks for itself, but only those who want to hear it will open themselves to it.

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**Meditation on the day's Gospel:** <https://en.elijamission.net/justice-and-mercy/>