

LIVING JESUS IN THE SPIRIT

by Sister Mary Charles

June 2006

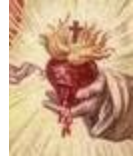
Dear Friends of the Heart of Jesus,

The first Sunday of June 2006 was my assigned date to give the talk on the spirituality of the Sacred Heart. Looking up that date I realized immediately the basic focus for this sharing, the Holy Spirit, since that date was Pentecost Sunday. Good inspiration, I thought! And since the “Year of the Eucharist” proclaimed by the Servant of God, Pope John Paul the Great, was such a grace for me personally and for our church, I desired to keep the fire kindled within me burning and to share this flame whenever I gave these talks. It is my prayer then that the following words will intensify your love for Jesus in the Eucharist through a deepening of devotion and appreciation of the role of the Holy Spirit in our Christian lives knowing as we do that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are but one Heart.

The Holy Spirit, the divine flame of the personal, burning love of the Father and the Son, descended in the sound of a mighty wind on that first Pentecost Tongues as of fire emanated from this divine flame. The apostles gave voice to this magnificent outpouring of love and carried that Pentecostal moment to the ends of the earth. In fact we refer to Pentecost as the birthday of the Church. The work of this celestial flame is to make each Christian glow with the fire of divine love. The mission of the Holy Spirit to the individual Christian soul is to form Christ in each one, to teach us to think with Christ, live with Christ, and fill our hearts with the sentiments of love for Christ. From this moment of Pentecost, the Church, in spite of the bitter persecutions, in spite of doctrinal disputes, and even the faithlessness of her own children at times, has lived and triumphed in a wondrous manner.

The Church has advanced through the centuries, strong in her faith and allegiance to the successor of Saint Peter. And ah what great successors of Saint Peter we have known in our very lifetime! The Church, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic is at the same time divine and of this world, unceasingly teaching the love and mercy of God, continuously proclaiming the reign of the Heart of Jesus, enlivened always by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to meet us and kindles faith in us, by virtue of our Baptism, the first sacrament of the faith. This is so beautifully expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: ” Baptism gives us the grace of new birth in God the Father, through His Son, in the Holy Spirit. For those who bear God’s Spirit are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, and the Son presents them to the Father.(Catechism of the Catholic Church # 683) For “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor 12: 3) The Spirit comes that He may abide with the Church forever. This is Christ’s own promise.

What exactly does the Church teach us about the Holy Spirit? To answer that question would take another session or two or three at least! But for today I have drawn my response from the writings of



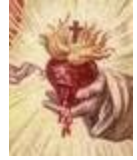
Blessed Columba Marmion, osb (1858-1923), a Benedictine spiritual master, beatified September 3, 2000, whom many of you probably know already from his writings.

Dom Marmion writes:” It belongs to the Infinite Essence to be one God in Three Persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That is the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Faith confesses in God both unity of nature and distinction of Persons. The Father and the Son are drawn to one another by a common and mutual love. Thus each gives Himself to the other, and this mutual love which springs from the Father and the Son as from one source is, in God, a subsisting love, a Person distinct from the other two Persons, named the Holy Spirit. Like the Father and the Son, He is God. He possesses, like them and with them, one and the same divine nature, equal knowledge, power, majesty and goodness. This divine Spirit is named Holy. He is the Spirit of holiness- holy in Himself, He makes holy. Works of sanctification are especially attributed to the Holy Spirit.” (Christ in His Mysteries) The Spirit is, in the Church, what the soul is in the body. The Holy Spirit completes in souls the work of holiness begun by the redemption.

The authentic means that Christ has given to His Church, whereby she transmits life to souls, namely the Sacraments, is never conferred without the Holy Spirit being invoked. It is the Spirit who fructifies the waters of Baptism. In Confirmation, the Holy Spirit is called upon to make the Christian a valiant soldier of Jesus Christ. It is to the Holy Spirit that the change is attributed whereby the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Sins are forgiven in the sacrament of Reconciliation by the Holy Spirit In the Anointing of the sick the Spirit is called upon to cure the sick, and strengthen them with courage and peace. In the sacrament of Matrimony the Holy Spirit is invoked in order that the bride and bridegroom may, by their lives, imitate the union that exists between Christ and the Church. The Holy Spirit is likewise invoked for the Ordination of priests. Yes, the Spirit is indeed, as we say in the Creed: “The Life- Giver!

With sanctifying grace received in Baptism the Holy Spirit places virtues within us that is, an habitual and firm disposition to do good. There are the supernatural virtues, above all, the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Then there are the infused, cardinal or pivotal virtues, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. We receive also what is termed the seven gifts of the Spirit, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, piety, fortitude, counsel, and reverential fear of the Lord. Also there are what Saint Paul speaks of so eloquently in his epistles charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, meekness, magnanimity, mildness, modesty, continency, and chastity; these we term the fruits of the Spirit. All this is but expressing, or at least trying to express, the exceptional richness and immense vivacity of the life of the Holy Spirit’s grace within. It is necessary though that all through our life we invoke the sanctifying intervention of the Holy Spirit.

As I said above, it is my ardent desire for all of us, myself included, to grow in our love of Jesus in the Eucharist, therefore let us for a few moments today consider more attentively the Holy Spirit’s activity in the most sublime moment of our daily life: Holy Mass. The Catechism of the Catholic Church points out that:” In every liturgical action the Holy Spirit is sent in order to bring us into communion with Christ and so to form His Body. The most intimate cooperation of the Holy Spirit and the Church is

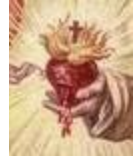


achieved in the liturgy. The 'Epiclesis' that is the 'invocation upon', is the intercession which begs the Father to send the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, so that the offering may become the body and blood of Christ and the faithful, by receiving them, may themselves become a living offering to God. The epiclesis is at the heart of each sacramental celebration, most especially of the Eucharist." (Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1107)

Having touched on the effects of the Holy Spirit as we celebrate Mass, I want to share with you a brief part of a homily given to our community this past Holy Thursday, the anniversary of the institution of the Eucharist. Our dear friend, Father Gary Dailey, Vocation Director for the Diocese of Springfield, had expressed so well some of the truths that my own heart wants to share with all of you. I have received Father's permission to quote excerpts from his homily. "It is well for us to consider carefully this most august mystery of the Eucharist, to reflect once again that this mystery of the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of the Lord, given to us, this mystery and no other is at once the source and the culmination of all life in the Church: 'The source and the culmination of all life in the Church'. These are the words of the Second Vatican Council. The council fathers were only repeating what has always been the clear teaching of the Church, always has been the expression of her faith, your faith and my faith. All the Church's apostolic work, her whole message to humankind, is summed up in this mystery, just as the whole saving mission of Jesus was and is summed up in this mystery. The whole mission of the Church, the mission entrusted to her by Jesus, is aimed at bringing all people to this mystery, this mystical table if you will, where they may be fed with the divine food of the Eucharist. Without the Eucharist there is simply no life in the Church; without the Eucharist the Church has no saving mission. This is what the fathers of the Second Vatican Council meant when they told us, reiterating the Church's constant teaching, that the Eucharist is the source and the culmination of all life in the Church.

What is the Eucharist? Well, first of all, the Eucharist is Jesus, and having said that there is really not much else we can say. But we can take that simple statement, 'the Eucharist is Jesus', and try to understand it at least a little better than formerly. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church we read that the inexhaustible riches of this sacrament are expressed in the different names we give it. Each name, the catechism says, evokes certain aspects of the sacrament. It is called Eucharist, the Lord's supper, the breaking of the bread, the memorial of the Lord's passion and resurrection, the holy sacrifice, the sacred mysteries, the most Blessed Sacrament, Holy Communion, the bread of angels, bread from heaven, and viaticum, to name only a few of the names by which we designate this sacrament. But while recalling all these names and drawing spiritual profit from the mere mention of them, I want to go back to the simple statement I made a moment ago, that the Eucharist is Jesus. Just what is meant by saying that?

The Church's faith, our faith, your faith and mine, is this: in this great sacrament, under the appearance of bread and wine, are contained the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate. Our bodily senses stop at appearances; faith penetrates the reality. Faith, that most fundamental of all the virtues upon which our whole spiritual edifice is built, knows for certain that,



notwithstanding all appearances, there is no bread and no wine after the consecration; there is Jesus, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. The whole saving mission of Jesus is presented to us, encapsulated, in this sacrament of His love. Are we weaned, discouraged, tempted, weighed down by the burden of our sins, our broken resolutions? Where can we turn? Only to Jesus! And where do we find Him as we find Him in this sacrament? Nowhere! Why? Because He nowhere gives Himself to us as He gives Himself to us in this sacrament.

This sacrament is Jesus, this sacrament, Jesus suffering, Jesus dying, Jesus dead, Jesus risen. This sacrament is the love of God and the love of Jesus poured out for us with divine prodigality. When the fathers of the Second Vatican Council tell us that this sacrament is the source and the culmination of all life in the Church, that it is the beginning and the summit of all holiness, are they not saying that the Eucharist is in this life, the supreme manifestation of God's love for us? No day in our lives should ever pass without careful, humble, grateful, meditation of this great sacrament, this great gift of God. It is our spiritual food; without it we languish and die. It is our spiritual strength; without it we grow faint and die by the wayside. It is our spiritual medicine; without it we succumb to every spiritual disease and waste away. It is God's love made ours. It is God's love asking for our love in return. I hope and pray that God may grant to each of us a deeper love for Jesus in this sacrament, a deeper appreciation of it and its place in our lives, a deeper knowledge of what it means when we say that this sacrament is the source and the culmination of all life in the Church. We mean that this sacrament is Jesus, for He, none else, is the source and the culmination of all life in the Church."

Let the Holy Spirit lead us to Jesus as we pray; "O Holy Spirit, love of the Father and the Son, establish Thyself as a furnace of love in the center of our hearts and bear constantly upwards, like eager flames, our thoughts, our affections, and our actions even to the bosom of the Father. May our entire life be a Gloria Path, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto."(Blessed Columba Marmion osb)

O Mary, daughter of the Father, mother of the Son, spouse of the Holy Spirit, do thou form us according to the Heart of thy Son in the Holy Spirit, that we may grow in resembling the Eucharist Heart of the living Jesus. Amen.

I would like to conclude this talk by quoting the following passage from Pope John Paul II. It captures all the above!" Ever since Pentecost, when the Church, the people of the New Covenant, began her pilgrim journey towards her heavenly homeland, the Divine Sacrament has continued to mark the passing of her days, filling them with confident hope(Encyclical Letter Ecclesia de Eucharistia)