

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND LOVE (J.F.M.H. 7.9.2017)

Before the birth of Christ mankind knew nothing about the internal life of God. It was Christ who revealed what man's intellect had been unable to discover. That God was a Trinity, and that the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity was expressed by the names Christ used for it, 'Father', 'Son', and 'Holy Spirit'. It was a relationship of love. By extension of that love it is also the relationship between God and those He created in love in His own image and likeness. So human love properly reflects God's love back to God and to the rest of God's creation. Such love is for the glory of God, and the ultimate good of the creatures He loves. It seems that in essence love is the Divine life in action. St. John tells us that, "*God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*" (1 Jn 4:16). Thus the Church has no hesitation in saying, "*Neither death nor life nor anything in all creation can come between us and Christ's love for us.*"

The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is perhaps the most mysterious. About Him we seem to hear least, and understand most vaguely. He is equal to the Father and Son, of the same nature, power, and substance, participating in the same divine life, eternally existing with them, and forming with them the ever Blessed Three-in-one. He represents from our human point of view, the wonderful mystery that **personifies the love proceeding from the Father and Son** forever. By this act He completes the perfection of God. Since God is one and indivisible, His love for us cannot be other than the love He Has for Himself, without shadow or alteration, **unchanging**, undying. Sin, as we may, we cannot make God love us less than Himself. He cannot help but love us, for the gifts of God, especially the supreme gift of Himself, given in love are without regret or repentance. Hence it is, we discover, that He loves Himself and us **in the love of the Holy Spirit**.

The great Pope Leo XIII speaking about the Holy Spirit and the Church said that: "*It is enough to state that, since Christ is the Head of the Church, the Holy Spirit is her soul.*" The use of the term "soul" conveys quite a lot about the Holy Spirit. While we are alive, our human souls exist within the boundaries of our bodies. They have a type of presence in us, proper to spirits, known as '*definitive*'. That is, each soul exists, in its entirety in the whole of the space circumscribed by our bodies, as well as in each part of that body, though not to the exclusion of any other spirit. In the case of the Third person of the Blessed Trinity, (who has no limits), His presence is not circumscribed, by our bodies, or anything else. He is said to be "indwelling". He is present in His entirety, in every member of Christ's mystical body (the Church), in Our Lady, and in each of us. No one has only a part of the Holy Spirit, even though we have differing states of grace and do not co-operate evenly with Him.

Of course the Holy Spirit works in each of us depends on our state of grace and the co-operation we give Him. With Mary, our Blessed Mother we too must say: "Be it done to me according to your will". Given that co-operation, we will be Saints. St. John Vianney, put it this way: "*If the damned were asked, 'Why are you in hell?', they would answer: 'because we have resisted the Holy Spirit'. If those in heaven were asked, 'Why are you in heaven? They would reply 'Because we were led by the Holy Spirit'.*" There is in this personal degree of human co-operation a divinely designed feature of

mankind. It is so important that God the Father waited for the agreement of Our Lady, before making her the Mother of His only begotten Son. St. Augustine expressed it well: ***"The just God made me, without me, but without me, will not make me just"***. We are designed to give or withhold the co-operation upon which our future depends. **We are designed to be tested.** This design feature, involving freewill, was present in Christ, as He was a real human person. We can see a reference to its consequences, in St. Luke's account of the Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple. This ends with the words: *"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man"*. (Lk. 2.52) Christ added His human co-operation to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Like us, while He was alive on earth, He could gain merit as a true human being. The gaining of merit could affect His human body so He could increase in wisdom. Christ also has a mystical body, which is affected. The Council of Trent made it clear that we derive our whole capability of meriting and satisfying, as well as the actual merits and satisfactions, solely from the infinite treasure of merits which Christ gained for us on the cross. (Trent Session VI) However, Christ **as God the Son**, being immutable, cannot gain merit. To do so would imply that at one time He was less meritorious than at another). Christ's mystical body, the Church, can gain merit. It is not difficult to see there are times when its members co-operate more fully with the Holy Spirit, become more Christ-like and receive more fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit, than at other times. We pray for the Church to be blessed, and at the same time we must co-operate more fully with the Holy Spirit and then the fruits of the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be showered on the Church and us.

How does one co-operate with the Holy Spirit? It is an important question because the Holy Spirit dwells within us. St. Paul reminds us of the consequences of this very forcibly: *"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple is you."* (1. Cor. 3.16) In Christ, we have the perfect example of the way we are to co-operate, in fact He told us that He "is the Way". We have to be Christ-like. In the saints, men, women and children of every walk and condition of life, we have further examples. They witness to the Holy Spirit in their lives by being Christ-like. When Christ asked St. Paul on the road to Damascus: *"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"* (Acts 9.4.) He personally identified Himself with the members of His mystical body, the Church. That body, the Church, was His own, the body of which He was the Head. If we persecute, snipe at, or reject it, we persecute, snipe at, and reject Christ. What a responsibility this lays on us to ensure we do not ourselves, and do not cause others to persecute, snipe at or reject Christ by any lack of witness to the Holy Spirit. Our lives have to bear witness to the fact that we identify with Christ, He is the head, and we are the members of His Mystical Body, within which the Holy Spirit is indwelling.

On one occasion Jesus was asked which is the Greatest Commandment? He said, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Having seen how important it is to love both God and those whom God loves it would be sensible to understand how we love. To see how to do anything well, it is general to look at the experts and see how they do it. One easily identifiable group of experts in loving is children. When they are very young they seem to love with trust and without conditions. In them there is no grudge. As they get older, if self-love should start*

to affect them, their previous total love is compromised, thus allowing space for grudges. The love of Christ however was, and is, always total, as He proved throughout His public life on earth. It was constant, even in the face of absolute cruelty He prayed for His tormenters, *“Father forgive them they know not what they do.”* (Lk. 23.34) In praying this He took the sins of His persecutors on to His own shoulders and died on the cross for them.

This mixture of Love, Mercy and Justice was total. It was one thing. There was no division between these attributes. As members of the mystical body of Christ, we too have to emulate this way of loving, even when we are treated unfairly, with spite, with cruelty, always we must pray for and love the perpetrators. It was what Christ showed us, and He is “the Way”. Like us, our neighbour needs Christ’s love and we have Christ’s own command to give it. The way He showed us included joy, mercy and justice. In mercy our wrongdoing was forgiven, and in justice the sin involved in that wrongdoing was atoned with His life. This is why the victim soul of substitution must always follow Christ, a victim of love. During the Mass, we are allowed to share in His act of perfect love made by Christ. The Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary puts it this way; *“Lord may the sacrifice we share make of us an everlasting gift to you.”* It’s our present to God. Pope Pius XI explained why and how this is necessary and how that sacrifice is always present and continued in the Church. *“There is the consideration also that the expiatory passion of Christ is renewed, and in a manner continued and fulfilled, in his mystical body, the Church. For, to use once more the words of St. Augustine, ‘Christ suffered whatever he was due to suffer; now nothing is wanting to the measure of his sufferings. Therefore the sufferings were complete, (but in the Head), there still remained the sufferings of Christ (in his body) (Ps. 86). This, indeed, our Lord Jesus himself proclaimed when speaking to Saul, ‘still breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples’. (Acts 9:1), He said, ‘It is I, Jesus, whom you persecute’ (Acts 9:5), clearly signifying that when persecutions are stirred up against the Church, the divine Head of the Church is himself attacked and harassed. Quite rightly, then, does Christ, who still suffers in his mystical body, desires to have us as the sharers of his expiation, and our intimate union with him of itself demands this, for as we are ‘the body of Christ and members of members. (1 Cor. 12:27) whatever the Head suffers, all the members must suffer...”* (Miserentissimus Redemptor)

O my God, I love you above all things, and for your sake I love my neighbour as myself. **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**