



The
Great Unknown
The Holy Ghost
and His Gifts

Antonio Royo Marín, O.P.

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*To the Immaculate Virgin,
most faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost
and most complete model of perfection and sanctity.*

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Introduction

DURING his first visit to Athens, St. Paul found the streets and squares of the city filled with innumerable stone idols—images that had prompted Petronius to comment in a now famous satirical remark that “The gods walk abroad so commonly in our streets that it is easier to meet a god than a man.”¹ St. Paul’s attention was attracted to an altar with the inscription: “To the unknown God.” That altar provided an opportunity for his magnificent speech in the Areopagus: “What therefore you worship, without knowing it, that I preach to you” (Acts 17:23).

Later, during a return visit to the city of Ephesus, the great Apostle found some disciples who had already embraced the Christian faith. “Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?” he asked them. “But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost” (Acts 19:1-2).

Incredible as it might seem after twenty centuries of Christianity, were St. Paul to ask the same question of a great many Christians today, he would receive an answer similar to the astonishing one of those first disciples of Ephesus. Even if the name of the Holy Ghost is familiar to them, the greater number of today’s Christians know very little of Him.

In view of this, we think it opportune to present the principal causes and the sad consequences of this regrettable forgetfulness of the adorable Person of the Holy Ghost.²

1. Petronius, *Satyricon* 17.

2. Cf. Arrighini, *Il Dio ignoto* (Turin 1937). We gather here the main ideas of the introduction.

Lack of Manifestations

The first reason for the general ignorance surrounding the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is perhaps due to the fact that His manifestations are little perceptible to the senses and thus largely unperceived by the vast majority of men.

God the Father is widely known, adored and loved. How could it be otherwise? His works are palpable and always before us. The magnificence of the skies, the riches of the earth, the immensity of the oceans, the impulse of torrents, the roar of thunder, the marvelous harmony reigning in the whole universe, and a thousand other admirable elements continuously repeat with a sovereign eloquence within reach of everyone, the existence, wisdom and formidable power of God the Father, Creator and Preserver of everything that exists.

We also know, adore and love the Son of God immensely. His prolocutors are neither less numerous nor less eloquent than those of His heavenly Father. The poignant story of His birth, life, passion and death; the crucifixes, churches, images; the daily Sacrifice of the Altar; His numerous liturgical feasts; all are constant reminders to everyone of the different mysteries of His divine and human life. The Eucharist, above all, perpetuating His real though invisible presence on this earth, makes Him the focus of the cult of the entire Catholic Church.

Not so with the Holy Ghost. Though it is true—as St. Basil stated so admirably and as we will see extensively throughout these pages—that “all which creatures in heaven and on earth possess, in the order of nature and of grace, comes from Him in the most intimate and spiritual way,”³ the sanctification He works in our souls and the supernatural life that He diffuses everywhere completely escape the perception of the senses. Nothing is more visible than the creation of the Father; nothing is more hidden than the action of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost did not assume flesh as did the Son; He did not live among nor talk visibly with men. Only three times did He manifest Himself with a sensible sign, and then only in a secondary and passing manner: in the form of a dove over Jesus during His baptism in the Jordan river; as a bright cloud on Mount Tabor; and as tongues of fire in the Cenacle in Jerusalem. His evangelical theophanies are solely these, and it seems that no others have

3. St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, c. 29, 55.

taken place throughout the history of the Church. This being so, the Church wisely forbids depicting Him under any other symbol. Artists, then, have no real variety of representative possibilities. These two or three symbols, which are hardly human and certainly not divine, are all they can offer to the piety of the faithful as reminders of His existence and His immense benefits.

Lack of Doctrine

Another reason why the laity and even some of the clergy know so little about the Holy Ghost and His operations is the scarcity of doctrine available on the subject. This is due, in turn, to the scarcity of good publications — either ancient or modern—about this Divine Person.

Monsignor Gaume writes:

How many times have we heard our venerable brothers in the priesthood lament the dearth of works about the Holy Ghost! Unfortunately, their complaints are only too justified. Indeed, what treatise about the Holy Ghost has been written in many centuries? . . . Even the teachings of classical theology about this subject are usually confined to some chapters on the Trinity, the creed, and the sacraments. All agree that these notions are completely insufficient. The diocesan catechisms, necessarily more limited than the manuals of elementary theology, have only some definitions. With real regret, it has to be admitted that even in countries that are predominantly Catholic, the teaching about the Holy Ghost could be improved considerably. Who would believe, for example, that among so many sermons and panegyrics of Bossuet there is none to be found on the Holy Ghost, not even one in Masillon, and but one in Bourdaloue? It is true that the means to fill in such a regrettable gap would be to have recourse to the Fathers of the Church and the great theologians of the Middle Ages, but, who has the time and possibilities for that? Hence the extreme difficulty for the zealous priest to instruct himself much less to teach others.

Seeing how little the teachers know, it can easily be deduced what their disciples know. In childhood we are taught some brief and abstract notions, but as words to be memorized rather than ideas to be developed. With confirmation these notions do become somewhat more extensive and complete. However, a tender age makes it difficult to take proper profit, so one remains in the realm of abstractions. In a catechism course the Holy Ghost does not take on substance, does not become a person, God Himself; the catechist, not knowing what to say of His intimate nature, speaks of His gifts. But even

these, being purely spiritual and interior, are not accessible to the imagination or the senses. It is, therefore, very difficult to explain them and make them understood. In the ordinary course of teaching, these gifts are not described clearly either in themselves, in their application to the actions of life, in their opposition to the seven capital sins, in their necessary relationship for the supernatural life of man, or as the crown of the edifice of salvation. This is why experience teaches that the least understood and appreciated part of Christian doctrine is precisely the part that ought to be most understood and appreciated. It is obvious that knowing only a little (and even that not well) about the third Person of the Holy Trinity is to scarcely know this first and most important mystery of our holy faith—a mystery without which there is no salvation.

Lack of Devotions

There is yet a third serious reason that perpetuates the regrettable state of affairs we are denouncing: While the number of devotions, functions and feasts multiplies unceasingly, those dedicated to the Holy Ghost are few.

All devotions approved by the Church are certainly very useful and holy, and we must admire and praise Divine Providence for having raised them in accordance with the different demands of religious and social life. Some of them are totally indispensable for the true Christian as, for example, those honoring the passion of Our Lord, the Blessed Sacrament and the Virgin Mary. Jesus Himself and His Blessed Mother have taken pleasure in revealing to us the importance and the advantages of devotion to the Sacred Heart, to the most holy rosary and others. All these should not diminish, nor make us forget, a devotion so important and fundamental as that to the Holy Ghost. This one should be intensely encouraged without decreasing the others.

Even the very feast of Pentecost is generally not celebrated with the splendor and enthusiasm that is desirable, yet in the liturgical cycle it ranks with the most solemn feasts of Easter and Christmas. This demonstrates the extraordinary importance the holy Church gives to devotion to the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. While in the other two festivities of the liturgical year, Christmas and Easter, an adequate correspondence on the part of the faithful of the whole world is clearly evident, the solemnity of Pentecost goes by almost unnoticed, as if it were any ordinary Sunday. This is an undeniable fact, repeated every year.

Thus, almost the whole year slips by without a proper commemoration of the Holy Ghost. With good reason, reflective Christians are left astonished and saddened.

Worse yet, most of the faithful are not even aware of this grievous impropriety and forget that there is a third Person called the Holy Ghost in the God they adore. How could it be otherwise if they very seldom hear about this God, Whom they never see on our altars? We can affirm without rashness that for an innumerable multitude of faithful, the Holy Ghost is the unknown God, whose altar St. Paul found when he entered Athens.

To avoid exaggeration and misunderstanding, it is fitting to point out that the Pauline formula of the unknown God, taken in its obvious sense, means not that the pagans completely ignored the existence of God, but that they lacked a correct idea of His perfections and works and, above all, that they did not render Him due cult. The formula unknown God as we apply it to the Holy Ghost is not at all forced. According to St. Paul's concept, it means, not that the Christians of our times ignore the existence and the divinity of the Holy Ghost, but that most of them do not have a sufficiently clear knowledge of His works, gifts, fruits, or sanctifying action in the Church and in souls. It especially means that Christians do not give Him the divine cult to which He is entitled just as are the other two Persons of the Holy Trinity. This is a point, I believe, upon which all agree.

Let us now examine the sad and harmful consequences of such great ignorance.

Fatal Consequences of This Oversight

Concerning all we have just said, it is obvious that the Holy Ghost, as God, cannot experience any pain or sadness. Infinitely happy in Himself, He has need neither of our remembrances nor our homages. However, if by some impossibility, He could feel pain, He would undoubtedly experience it intensely as a result of our incredible ignorance and oversight of His Divine Person. He could repeat the words the Psalmist attributes to the future Messiah abandoned by His chosen people: "My heart hath expected reproach and misery. And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none" (Ps. 68:21).

This complaint is even more justified in view of the suffering—so to speak—that the Holy Ghost must experience at not being able to unfold Himself, as He would ardently desire, over souls and over the Christian world. Nothing

is nor can be more diffusive than this Divine Spirit, Who is personally the Supreme Good. However, when He encounters the rebellion of our forgetful and indifferent freedom, He feels as if constrained to retreat and to restrict Himself, to limit His sanctifying action to a few souls who are totally faithful to Him, and to bestow His ineffable gifts as though with a miserly hand, since there are very few who ask them of Him and yet fewer who are worthy of them. Moreover, He frequently sees those who are His temples of flesh and bone—those temples consecrated with the waters of baptism and sanctified and embellished afterward in so many ways—miserably desecrated with the dirtiest and most repulsive sins. He sees Himself vilely thrown out of these temples to make room for the spirit of fornication, hatred, revenge, pride and all the other capital sins.

How much more sorrowful Christians themselves should feel upon seeing how they are so badly instructed and unworthy of such a great God, for this entails, above all, ignoring or despising the very source of supernatural and divine life.

The Church, in its fundamental Symbol, expressly recognizes as the Holy Ghost's this awesome attribute of bestowing supernatural life on souls: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life" (*Dominum et vivificantem*). The dependence of the supernatural life on the divine virtue of the Paraclete is a highly dynamic fundamental principle of Christianity. This principle, or rather, the practical orientation derived from it, constitutes the point of departure for all spiritual progress, of the progressive ascension from the common and simple Christian life to the highest and most sublime forms of holiness. It can be said that all the theology of grace is contained as in its seed in the word *vivificante* when referring to the Holy Ghost. Consequently, without an adequate knowledge and cult of the Divine Spirit, the seed of Christian life supernaturally instilled by Him in Baptism, is as though paralyzed or thwarted in its future development. The soul suffers, vegetates, and weakens and will scarcely ever reach Christian manhood.

Those who do not concern themselves with knowing and adoring the Holy Ghost—and, unfortunately, they are many—place an insurmountable obstacle between Him and their supernatural life. This world of grace, this true and only union of the soul with God, with all its divine elements, with its marvelous laws, with its sacred duties, with its incomparable magnificence, with its eternal reality, with its fights, its joys, its alternatives and its end; this superior world, for which man has been created and in which he must live, move and dwell, almost does not exist for him. The noble emulation that

should spontaneously derive from all of it is changed into cold indifference: esteem into scorn; love into annoyance; enthusiasm into tediousness and boredom. Created for heaven, man seeks only earthly goods. His life is concentrated in the sensible world and becomes purely earthly and animal. There is only one way to make it practically and profoundly Christian: to know, to invoke, to love and to live in an intimate and close union with the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life: *Dominum et vivificantem*.

Therefore, we are going to undertake the theological-mystical study of the adorable person of the Holy Ghost and of His sanctifying action in the Church and in souls, through His most precious gifts and charismas.

Once more, we offer these pages to the Immaculate Virgin Mary, most faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost, in order that she may bless them and make them fruitful for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls.

1

The Holy Ghost in the Trinity

CATHOLIC doctrine teaches as the foremost and fundamental dogma that there is only one God in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. This doctrine is stated in Divine Revelation in a clear and explicit way and has been proposed infallibly by the Church in all the symbols of Faith. We quote here, because of its special explicitness and majestic rhythm, the formula of the famous Athanasian Creed *Quicumque*:

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith; and he who does not keep it whole and inviolate will perish forever.

Now, the Catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, and the majesty coeternal.

Such as the Father is, such also is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. Uncreated is the Father, uncreated is the Son, uncreated is the Holy Ghost. Immense is the Father, immense the Son, immense the Holy Ghost. Eternal is the Father, eternal the Son, eternal the Holy Ghost.

And yet, They are not three eternal, but only one eternal, just as They are not three uncreated nor three immensities, but only one uncreated and only one immensity.

Likewise, omnipotent is the Father, omnipotent the Son, omnipotent the Holy Ghost; and yet, They are not three almighties but only one almighty.

Thus, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God. And yet, there are not three gods, but only one God. Likewise is the Father Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord; but there are not three lords, but only one Lord, for just as Christian truth compels us to acknowledge each Person in particular as God and Lord, Catholic religion forbids us to say three gods or three lords.

The Father was not made by anyone, neither created nor begotten. The Son is from the Father alone, not made, not created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding.

So, there is but one Father, not three Fathers; only one Son, not three Sons; only one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

And in this Trinity, nothing is before or after, nothing greater or lesser. The whole three Persons are among Themselves coeternal and coequal, so that, as was already stated, the Unity is to be worshipped in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity.

Whosoever, therefore, wills to be saved must think thusly concerning the Trinity.

Thus, the Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, not by way of generation as the Son is generated by the Father but by virtue of a mutual and ineffable current of love between the Father and the Son. Let us consider, in a very brief summary, the generation of the Word by the Father and the spiration of the Holy Ghost by the Father and the Son in the bosom of the Blessed Trinity.

The Generation of the Son

A simple popular exposition, easily grasped by everyone, follows:

When a person looks in a mirror, an image similar to himself is produced not only because it resembles the person but also because it imitates his movements; if the person moves, his image likewise moves. This image, so similar, is produced in an instant, with neither effort nor instruments, merely by looking in the mirror. Analogously, we can imagine God the Father: Contemplating Himself in the mirror of His divinity with the eyes of His understanding and knowing Himself perfectly, He generates or produces an image absolutely equal to Himself. Now, this image is the substantial figure of the Father, His perfect radiance, the total expression of His intelligence, subsistent and only comprehensive word, adequate end of the contemplation of the sovereign essence, splendor of His glory and image of His substance. It is, simply, His Son, His Word, the second person of the Holy Trinity.¹

This generation is so perfect that it completely exhausts the infinite fecundity of the Father. Bossuet writes:

God will never have another Son but this one because He is infinitely perfect and there cannot be two like Him. A one and only generation of this perfect nature exhausts all His fecundity and attracts all His love. This is why the Son

1. Miralles Sbert, in *Docete*, v. 1, pp. 21 and 27.

of God calls Himself the only one, *Unigenitus*, by which at the same time He demonstrates that He is Son, not by grace or adoption, but by nature. The Father, confirming from on high this word of the Son, makes this voice come down from heaven: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. This is my Son, I have only Him and from all eternity I have given Him and give Him unceasingly all my love."²

And Monsignor Gay adds:

Catholic theology teaches that God enunciates Himself eternally in one only word, which is the very image of His being, the character of His substance, the measure of His immensity, the face of His beauty, the splendor of His glory. The life of God is infinite: millions of words uttered by millions of creatures discoursing wisely about Him for millions of centuries would never suffice to tell it. But this single Word says all absolutely. He who were to hear perfectly this Word would understand all things since he would understand the Author of all things and there would be no secrets left for him in the divine nature. Only God, though, hears eternally the Word that He pronounces. God says it; It speaks to God; It is God.³

Dom Columba Marmion expounds the divine generation of the Word in the following terms:

Revelation teaches us this marvel of God's fecundity; there is in Him an altogether spiritual and ineffable paternity; He is Father, the principle of all the Divine Life in the Trinity.

Being Infinite Intelligence, God perfectly comprehends Himself; in a single act, He sees all that He is, and all that is in Him. He comprehends, as it were, in a single glance, the plenitude of His perfections, and, in one thought, in one word that exhausts all His knowledge. He expresses this infinite knowledge to Himself. This thought conceived by the eternal intelligence, this utterance whereby God expresses Himself is the Word. Faith tells us that this Word is God: *Et Deus erat Verbum*, because the Word has (or rather, He is) with God one and the same divine nature.

And because the Father communicates to this Word a nature not only like unto His own, but identical with it, Holy Scripture tells us that He begets the Word, and it calls the Word, *the Son*. The inspired books repeat the ineffable exclamation of God contemplating His Son and proclaiming the beatitude of His eternal Fatherhood: From the bosom of My Divinity, before the creation

2. *Elevaciones sobre los misterios*, sem. 2, elev. 1.

3. *Elevaciones*, 1, 6.

of the light, I communicated life to Thee: *“Ex utero, ante luciferum, genui te”* (Ps. 109:3); “Thou art My Son, My most beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased”: *“Tu es Filius meus dilectus, in te complacui mihi”* (Luke 3:22, Mark 1:11). Because this Son is indeed perfect; He possesses with the Father all the divine perfections saving the property of “being Father”; so perfect is He that He is the equal of His Father by the unity of nature. A creature can only give to another creature a nature *like* to his own: *simili sibi*; but God begets God and gives to Him His own nature. It is God’s glory to beget the Infinite and to contemplate Himself in another Himself, Who is His equal. So equal is the Son to the Father that He is the Only-begotten, for there is only one Divine nature and the Son exhausts the eternal fecundity: *Unigenitus Dei Filius*; therefore He is one with the Father: *“Ego et Pater unum sumus”* (John 10:30).

Finally this beloved Son, equal to the Father, although distinct from Him and, like Him, a Divine Person, does not leave the Father. The Word ever dwells in the infinite Intelligence that conceives Him; the Son ever dwells in the bosom of the Father Who begets Him: *Unigenitus Dei Filius que est in sinu Patris*.⁴

The Procession of the Holy Ghost

Faith teaches us that the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, proceeds from the Father and the Son by a sublime spiration of love. Following is a popular explanation of the ineffable mystery:

In order to better understand this unutterable procession of love, let us leave for a moment divine metaphysics and simply ask our own heart. It will tell us that its very life consists in loving.

The heart beats, and beats continually until it dies. At each beat it does nothing but repeat: “I love, I love; that is my mission and my only occupation.” When finally it finds another heart that understands it and answers, “I love you, too,” oh, what a great joy!

What is new between these two hearts to make them so happy? Perhaps the sole movement of the beats that look for each other and mingle? No. I am convinced that between myself and that person that I love something exists. This thing cannot be my love, neither the love of the other person; it is simply our love, in other words, the marvelous result of the two beats, the sweet bond that links them, the very pure embrace of two hearts that kiss each other and become inebriated: *our love*. Ah, if we could make it live eternally to witness, in a lively and real way, that we have totally and truly given ourselves to each other! This fatal inability in human love that always leaves an opening for cruel uncertainties can never exist in the heart of God.

4. *Christ in His Mysteries*, (St. Louis: Herder, 1939), pp. 37-38.

Since God also loves, who can doubt it? He is precisely substantial and eternal love: "*Deus caritas est*" (I John 4:16).

The Father loves His Son. He is so beautiful! He is His own light, His own splendor, His glory, His image, His Word. . . .

The Son loves the Father: He is so good and He gives Himself entirely and totally to Him in the generative act with such an amiable and complete plenitude!

These two immense loves of the Father and the Son are not expressed in heaven with words, songs or shouts . . . because when love reaches the highest degree it does not talk, does not sing, does not shout; rather, it expands in a breath, in a blowing of air between the Father and the Son, which becomes, like Them, real, substantial, personal, divine: the Holy Ghost.

Behold the great mystery revealed here with the heart, which is perhaps better than with a metaphysical reasoning: The life of the most Holy Trinity, the generation of the Word by the Father and the procession of the Holy Ghost under the breath of their reciprocal love. In the life of the Trinity there is a constant ebb and flow: The life of the Father, principle and source, overflows in the Son; and from the Father and the Son it is communicated, by way of love, to the Holy Ghost, the final end of the intimate operations of the divinity. This Holy Ghost Who thus enjoys the reciprocal donation of the Father and of the Son—His consubstantial gift—in His turn, gathers Them and keeps Them in the unity. The three Persons, in possession of the single divine substance, are among Themselves nothing but a one and only thing: one true God.⁵

In more scientific language, but with identical doctrinal exactness, Dom Columba Marmion expounds the divine procession of the Holy Ghost:

All we know about the Holy Ghost is what has been taught us by Revelation. And what has it taught us?

It belongs to the Infinite Essence to be one God in Three Persons: the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. That is the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Faith confesses in God both unity of nature and distinction of Persons.

The Father, in knowing Himself, declares and expresses this knowledge in the Infinite Word; this act is simple and eternal; and the Son, begotten of the Father, is like and equal to Him, because the Father communicates to the Son His nature, life and perfections.

The Father and the Son are drawn to one another by a common and mutual love: the Father is of such absolute perfection and beauty, the Son is so perfect an image of His Father! 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 Ghost. This name is mysterious, but Revelation gives us no other.

5. Father Arrighini, *Il Dio ignoto*, pp. 33-35.

The Holy Ghost is the ultimate term in the interior operations of the Divine life: He achieves, if we may thus lisp in speaking of such mysteries, the cycle of intimate activity in the Holy Trinity. But like the Father and the Son, He is God; He possesses, like Them and with Them, one and the same Divine nature, equal knowledge, equal power, equal majesty, equal goodness.⁶

This is what Catholic theology, based immediately in the facts of divine revelation, succeeds in telling us about the Holy Ghost in the bosom of the Blessed Trinity. It is very little indeed, but we do not know any more. Only when the shadows of this mortal life disappear and the veil is drawn back by the beatific vision, will we, enrapt, contemplate the ineffable mystery that will make the blessed dwellers of the heavenly Jerusalem eternally happy.

6. *Christ, the Life of the Soul* (St. Louis: Herder, 1926), p. 95.

2

The Holy Ghost in Sacred Scripture

AS noted in the preceding chapter, we do not know anything further about the Holy Ghost and the other two Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity than the facts supplied by Divine Revelation. Natural reason, through its own effort, can prove with all certainty the *existence of God*, deducing it by way of necessary causality from the unquestionable existence of created things.¹ The watch inevitably proclaims the existence of the watchmaker.

The scientific proof of the existence of God leads us also to the scientific knowledge of certain divine attributes such as God's simplicity, immensity, kindness, eternity, infinite perfection, and so on. However, in no way can it lead us to knowledge of the divine realities that exceed and transcend the natural knowledge that man obtains from the contemplation of created beings. Among these infinitely transcendent truths, foremost is the ineffable mystery of the trinity of persons in God. Without Divine Revelation, natural reason could never have even suspected the existence of three distinct persons in the very simple unity of God.

Let us see, then, what Sacred Scripture, which contains the treasure of written Divine Revelation, tells us about the Divine Person of the Holy Ghost. We will consider the Old and New Testaments separately.

The Old Testament

The Divine Person of the Holy Ghost does not appear clearly and distinctly in the Old Testament, nor do the Persons of the Father or the Son. However,

1. Vatican Council I defined it expressly with the following words: "If anyone says that the one and true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be known with certainty with the

there is a multitude of indications and clues that, under the light of the New Testament, appear as clear allusions to the Spirit of Love.²

The Hebrew expression “*ruah Yahweh*” (Spirit of God) appears in the Old Law with different senses. There are four main groups:

a) First, it denotes the *wind* by which God makes known His presence, His strength or His wrath. He will appear thus even in the cenacle on the day of Pentecost.³ From the very beginning, it is the *breath of life* that God breathes in man and even in animals. When God takes it away, death comes, and if He gives it to the dead, they rise.⁴ In a broader sense, it is the *creative blow*, the wind of God, that brings the world from nothingness.⁵

b) Sometimes, there are certain phenomena of specific religious character that appear in very intimate dependence on the *ruah Yahweh*. They are, mainly, the art of the workers of the tabernacle, the power of governing received by Moses and transmitted by him to the elders and to Josue, the warlike strength and courage of the liberators of Israel and, above all, the prophetic inspiration. The last is received individually or collectively, either in a temporary or permanent way, with or without exterior phenomena, by the chiefs of the people and by the elders or by individuals who do not belong to the hierarchy; and is passed or transmitted by contagium.⁶

c) In a third group of texts, the *ruah Yahweh* shows Himself as a *breath of sanctity*. In the *Miserere* of David, the expression “Holy Ghost” appears for the first time. His effects are firmness, good will, contrition and humility, submission to the divine will and correction of our behavior, rectitude, justice and peace, knowledge of the divine will, and the gift of wisdom. The rebels, on the contrary, those who

natural light of human reason by means of the things that have been made: let him be anathema” (Denziger, 1806).

2. Cf. *Iniciación teológica* (Barcelona: 1957), vol. 1, pp. 421 ff.

3. Cf. Gen. 3:8; Exod. 10:13 and 19, 14:21; Ps. 17:16; Acts 2:2.

4. Cf. Gen. 2:7, 7:15; Job 12:10, 34:14-15; Ps. 103:29-30; Ezech. 37:1-14; 2 Mach. 7:22-23.

5. Cf. Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6.

6. Cf. Exod. 31:3; Num. 11:16-17, 27:15-23; Judges 3:9-10, 6:34, 11:29; Num. 11:25, 20:25-29, 24:2; Gen. 41:38; IV Kings 2:15; I Kings 19:24; Ezech. 1:28, 2:8, 3:22-27; I Kings 10:5-13; II Kings 23:1-2; Num. 11:26-29, 19:20-24; IV Kings 2:9-10.

make projects or establish pacts without that Spirit, accumulate sins over sins and sadden the Holy Spirit of God.⁷

d) Finally, the *ruah Yahweh* is presented to us as an essentially messianic phenomenon, first because the Messiah will be unlimitedly possessed by the Spirit of God, and secondly because in the era of the Messiah there will be an intense effusion of the Spirit of Yahweh.⁸

The New Testament

Herein appears the full revelation of the Holy Ghost as the third Person of the Holy Trinity. The Spirit of God fills the Baptist before his birth, takes the dynamism of the Most High to Mary, transmits Itself to Elizabeth, by contagion, and to Zachary, and rests over Simeon.⁹

Jesus has the Spirit of God over Him; He is "moved" by Him, impelled by His dynamism, with the plenitude that His double quality of Messiah and Son confers on Him. He begins His ministry "full of the Holy Ghost," Whom He possesses as Son. He will send Him to His apostles after His ascension to communicate to them the dynamism and ardor necessary to take His testimony even to the uttermost part of the earth.¹⁰

This took place on the day of Pentecost with wind and fire, in accordance with the prophecy of Joel, the announcement of the Baptist and the promise of Jesus. A first effusion, renewed collectively on different occasions, either by divine initiative or by the apostles' petition (as a direct donation of God and, more precisely, of Jesus) or by the imposition of hands.¹¹

The Spirit thus received is a prophetic Spirit: the One who has spoken through the prophets. It is also a Spirit of faith and of wisdom, or of dynamism, as that of Christ. It causes the speaking in tongues and It confers the faculty of forgiving sins. It descends in a permanent way over all the disciples of Jesus, just as It descended over Jesus Himself. It directs the apostles and their disciples constantly as a Teacher, but It can also be resisted.¹²

7. Cf. Ps. 50:12-14, 18-19; Isa. 57:15; Ps. 143:4, 7 and 10; Isa. 32:15-17; Wis. 9:17; Isa. 30:1, 63:10.

8. Cf. Isa. 11:1 ff., 42:1 ff., 32:1 ff., 44:2-3; Ezech. 11:14 ff., 36:26-27; Zach. 12:10, 13:1-5.

9. Cf. Luke 1:15-17, 1:35; Matt. 1:18-20; Luke 1:41-45, 1:67, 2:25-27.

10. Cf. Matt. 3:16; John 1:32-33; Luke 4:1, 10:21, 4:14, 16-21; Mark 13:11; John 16:7; Acts 1:4-8.

11. Cf. Acts 2:1-4, 17-18, 11-16 and 33, 11:15-16, 4:31, 8:14-19, 10:44-45, 15:8, 19:2-6.

12. Cf. Acts 2:4-11 and 17-18, 10:44-46, 1:16, 7:51, 6:5, 11:24, 6:3, 1:8, 4:31, 10:38; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:2, 8:29, 10:19, 5:3-9, 7:51.

In His marvelous sermon at the Last Supper, Jesus tells His apostles that the Holy Ghost will teach them all things, will restore to their memories everything He had told them, will guide them to the complete truth, will communicate to them the things to come; He will glorify Christ because He will take from what is His and make it known to the apostles.¹³

St. Paul explains in a marvelous way the theology of the Holy Ghost. He is the Spirit of God and of Christ. His operation is the same as that of the Father and of the Son and makes the just ones temples of God and of the Holy Ghost Himself. For the faithful He is the principle of the life in Christ, although it is certain that to live in Christ and in the Spirit is the same thing. He is the distributor of every gift. He scrutinizes the secrets of God. He is the gift par excellence. He moves us that we may please God, and we should never grieve Him.¹⁴

Finally, the formula of Baptism, dictated by Christ Himself, places the Holy Ghost on an equal plane with the Father and the Son; and in the epistles of St. Paul, the three Divine Persons constantly appear associated. Thus, the Spirit of God, which hovered over the primeval chaos at the dawn of creation, appears later as a *personal* being manifesting Himself in the promotion of faithful souls and Christian society and leading us to invoke with unspeakable groanings the revelation of the children of God and the redemption of our bodies. He it is Who will bring about the definitive coming of Christ.¹⁵

These are the fundamental facts Sacred Scripture provides us about the person of the Holy Ghost. In the following pages, we will see how theologians have constructed the complete theology of the Holy Ghost on the basis of these fundamental facts and on those supplied by *Christian tradition* (like the Bible, a legitimate source of Divine Revelation).

13. Cf. John 14:26, 16:13-14.

14. Cf. Rom. 8:9-14; I Cor. 2:10-14; II Cor. 3:17; I Cor. 12:3-13, 6:11; Titus 3:4-7; I Cor. 6:19, 3:16; Rom. 1:4, 8:1-16 and 22-27; Gal. 4:6, 6:7-8; Eph. 4:1-6; Rom. 5:5; Eph. 4:30.

15. Cf. Matt. 28:19; Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:14-17, 15:15-16; I Cor. 12:4-6; II Cor. 1:21-22, 13:13; Titus 3:4-6; Heb. 9:14; Rom. 8:26; Apoc. 22:17.

3

Different Names of the Holy Ghost

IN order to know a little less imperfectly the intimate nature (proper or appropriate) of any one of the Divine Persons in particular, it is very useful and profitable to examine the different names by which Sacred Scripture, tradition and the liturgy of the Church denominate that specific Person, since each of them contains a new aspect or nuance that makes the Person a little better known to us. To understand this within its just boundaries, it is necessary to explain the difference between the operations proper to each Divine Person and those which, although indeed common to all three, are appropriated to a certain Person because they match very well with the properties peculiar and exclusive to that Person. To this end, the renowned abbot of Maredsous admirably writes:

As you know, there is *in God*, only one intelligence, only one will, only one power, because there is only one Divine nature; but also there is distinction of persons. This distinction results from the mysterious *operations* that are accomplished *in the intimate life of God* and from the mutual relations derived from these operations. The Father begets the Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. "To beget, to be a Father," is the exclusive property of the First Person; "to be Son" is the personal property of the Son, as "to proceed from the Father and the Son by way of love," is the personal property of the Holy Ghost. These personal properties establish the mutual relations between the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, from whence the distinction arises. But setting apart these properties and these relations, all is common to the Three Persons and indivisible among them: the same intelligence, the same will, the same power, the same majesty, because the same indivisible Divine nature is common to the Three Persons. That is what we may know of the intimate operations in God.

As to what concerns the "exterior" works, the actions accomplished *outside God*, whether in the material world, as the action of directing every creature

toward its end, or in the world of souls, such as the action of producing grace, these are common to the three Divine Persons. Why so? Because the source of these operations, works and actions is the Divine nature and this Divine nature is one and indivisible; the Holy Trinity acts in the world as one and the same Cause. But it is God's will that men should confess and honour not only the Divine Unity but also the Trinity of Persons. That is why the Church, for example in her liturgy, attributes to one or other of the Divine Persons certain actions which are produced in the world and, although common to the Three Persons, have a special relation or an intimate affinity with the place, if I may so speak, which this Person occupies in the Holy Trinity and with the attributes which are particular and exclusively His own.

Thus, the Father being the source, origin and principle of the other two Persons—without this implying either hierarchical superiority or priority of time—the works produced in the world that especially manifest power or the character of origin are attributed to the Father. For example, the creation by which God drew the universe out of nothing. We sing in the *Credo*: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth." Had therefore the Father a greater part, did He manifest more power in this work than the Son and the Holy Ghost? No, it would be an error to suppose so; the Son and the Holy Ghost acted in this as much as the Father, for God works eternally by His almighty power, and almighty power is common to the Three Persons. Why then does Holy Church speak after this manner? Because in the Holy Trinity, the Father is the *first* Person, the Principle without principle, whence proceed the two other Persons. This is His exclusive personal property distinguishing Him from the Son and Holy Ghost, and it is in order that we may not forget this property that the "exterior" actions which, by affinity of nature, place it in relief, are attributed to the Father.

It is the same for the Person of the Son. He is, in the Holy Trinity, the Word proceeding from the Father by way of intelligence; He is the Infinite expression of the Divine Thought; He is above all considered as Eternal Wisdom. That is why those works in which wisdom especially shines forth are attributed to Him.

It is again the same for the Holy Ghost. What is He in the Holy Trinity? He is the ultimate term of the Divine operations, of the life of God in Himself; He closes, so to speak, the cycle of the intimate Divine life: it is His personal property to proceed from both the Father and the Son by way of love. This is why, all that is a work of achievement of perfection, all that is a work of love, of union and consequently of holiness—for our holiness is measured by our degree of union with God—is attributed to the Holy Ghost. Is it because He sanctifies more than the Father and the Son? No, the work of our sanctification is common to the Three Divine Persons; but, once again, as the work of sanctification in the soul is a work of perfecting, of achievement and union, it is attributed to the Holy Ghost because in this way we may more easily remember what are His personal properties so as to honor and adore Him in that which distinguishes Him from the Father and the Son.

God wills that we should have it as much at heart to honour His Trinity of Persons as to adore His Unity of Nature and therefore He wills that the Church, even in her language, should recall to the minds of her children not only that there is but one God but also that He is in Three Persons.

This is what is called *appropriation*. It is founded on Revelation; it is employed by the Church; it has for its aim to place in relief the attributes proper to each Divine Person. In doing this, it makes these properties known to us and makes us love them more.¹

Let us see, then, which are the names that belong to the Holy Ghost in a proper and perfect way and which only by a very reasonable appropriation.

Proper Names of the Third Divine Person

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the three most proper and representative names of the Third Divine Person are: Holy Ghost, Love and Gift.² We will examine them one by one.

1) *Holy Ghost*. If the two words that form this name are considered separately, they fit the three Divine Persons equally; the three are *spirit* and the three are *holy*. However, if taken as one name or denomination, they fit exclusively the third Divine Person because only He proceeds from the other two by a common and infinitely holy spiration of love.³

About this most holy name, Catholic doctrine teaches:

a) The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son: *qui ex Patre Filioque procedit*. It is expressly defined by the Church (Denziger 691) against the Greek Orthodox, who reject the *Filioque* and affirm that the Holy Ghost proceeds only from the Father.

b) Catholic doctrine is clear: If by an impossibility, the Holy Ghost did not proceed also from the Son, He would not be distinguished from Him in any way. The Divine Persons cannot be distinguished one from the other by something *absolute*—since there would not be one essence

1. Columba Marmion, O.S.B., *Christ, the Life of the Soul*, pp. 95-98. (Emphasis his.)

2. Cf. *Summa Theologica*, I, qq. 36-38.

3. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 36, a. 1, ad 1.

of the three Persons—but rather by something *relative* and opposite between them, namely by a relationship of origin, which is exactly what makes the Divine Persons distinct between themselves.⁴

c) The Holy Ghost does not proceed from the Father through the Son in the sense that the Son would be final cause, formal cause or instrumental cause of the spiration of the Holy Ghost in the Father, but rather in the sense that the spirative virtue of the Son is communicated to Him by the Father.⁵

d) The Father and the Son are *one principle* of the Holy Ghost, with a unique spiration common to both.⁶

e) The Holy Ghost is not made, nor created, nor generated, but rather *proceeds* from the Father and the Son (Denziger 39).

2) *Love*. The word *love*, referring to God, may be taken in three senses:

a) Essentially: In this sense, it is common to the three Divine Persons.

b) Notionally: This fits only the Father and the Son; it is Their *active* love that gives origin to the Holy Ghost.

c) Personally: This fits exclusively the Holy Ghost, as *passive end* of the love of the Father and the Son.⁷

It can be affirmed that *the Father and the Son love each other by the Holy Ghost*—understanding in this formula their *notional* or originator love, since, in this sense, *to love* is nothing else but to spirate the love, just as to speak is to produce a word and to bloom is to produce flowers.⁸

3) *Gift*. The Holy Fathers and the liturgy of the Church (*Veni, Creator*) frequently use the word *gift* to designate the Holy Ghost. This is grounded in Sacred Scripture (John 4:10; 7:39; Acts 2:38; 8:20).

The same distinction noted regarding the preceding name must be made here:

4. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2; *De potentia*, q. 10, a. 5, ad 4; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, chap. 24.

5. Cf. *Summa*, I, q. 36, a. 3.

6. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 4.

7. Cf. *ibid.*, I, q. 37, a. 1.

8. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 2.

a) *In the essential sense*, it means all that can be graciously given by God to rational creatures, whether in the natural or supernatural order. In this sense it fits equally the three Divine Persons and the Divine Essence Itself, in as much as, by grace, a rational creature can enjoy God.⁹

b) *In the notional or originator sense*, it means the divine Person Who, having His origin in another, is donated or can be donated by Him to the rational creature. In this sense the name *gift* can fit only the Son and the Holy Ghost, not the Father because He cannot be donated by anyone since He does not proceed from anyone.

c) *In the personal sense*, it is the same Divine Person Whom it befits, by virtue of His own origin, that He be the proximate reason of every divine donation and be Himself donated in an entirely free way to the rational creature. In this *personal* sense, the name *gift* corresponds exclusively to the Holy Ghost, Who, because He proceeds by way of love, has the reason of *first gift*, love being the first thing we give to a person whenever we grant him any grace.¹⁰

Names Appropriated to the Holy Ghost

The names that tradition, the liturgy of the Church and Sacred Scripture itself appropriate to the Holy Ghost are many. He is called Paraclete, Creator Spirit, Consoler Spirit, Spirit of truth, Power of the Most High, Advocate, Finger of God, Guest of the soul, Seal, Union, Link, Bond, Kiss, Live Fountain, Fire, Spiritual Unction, Most blessed Light, Father of the poor, Giver of gifts, Light of hearts, and others.

Let us examine briefly the basis for those names appropriated to the Holy Ghost.

1) *Paraclete*. Jesus Christ Himself uses this expression to refer to the Holy Ghost (John 14:16 and 26; 15:26; 16:7). Some translate it as *Teacher* because Christ Himself says a little later that “He will teach you all things” (John 14:26). Others translate it as *Consoler* because through the suavity of His consolation He will prevent the Apostles from feeling fatherless (John 14:18). Yet others translate Paraclete as *Advocate*,

9. Cf. *ibid.*, I, q. 43, aa. 2 and 3.

10. Cf. *ibid.*, I, q. 38, aa. 1 and 2.

Who will plead for us, in a phrase of St. Paul, “with unspeakable groanings” (Rom. 8:26).

2) *Creator Spirit*. “The Holy Ghost” says St. Thomas, “is the principle of the creation of things.”¹¹ This is so because God creates things out of love, and one love in God is the Holy Ghost. For this reason, the psalm says: “Thou shalt send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created” (Ps. 103:30).

3) *Spirit of Christ*. The Holy Ghost completely filled the most holy soul of Christ (Luke 4:1). In the synagogue of Nazareth, Christ applied to Himself the following text of Isaias: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” (Isa. 61:1; cf. Luke 4:18). And St. Paul says that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9); but “if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:11).

4) *Spirit of Truth*. This is an expression of Christ Himself applied to the Holy Ghost: “The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not nor knoweth him” (John 14:17). This means, according to St. Cyril and St. Augustine, the true *Spirit of God* and is opposed to the *spirit of the world*, to the lying and deceitful wisdom. That is why the Savior adds “whom the world cannot receive” because “the sensual man perceives not these things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because it is spiritually examined” (I Cor 2:14).

5) *Power of the Most High*. This is the expression used by the angel of the annunciation when he explains to Mary how the mystery of the Incarnation will take place: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee” (Luke 1:35). In other Gospel passages the “power from on high” is also mentioned (cf. Luke 24:49).

6) *Finger of God*. In the hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, the Church designates the Holy Ghost with this mysterious expression “Finger of the right hand of the Father” *Digitus paternae dexteræ*. This is a metaphor very rich in content and very fruitful in application, since all

11. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, chap. 20. The commentary in this and the two following chapters is admirable.

our constructive and creative power resides in the fingers of the hand—especially in those of the right hand. For that reason, Scripture places the power of God in His hands: the tables of the Law were written by the “finger of God” (Deut. 9:10). The heavens are the “works of thy fingers” (Ps. 8:4); the magicians of the pharaoh had to recognize the “finger of God” (Exod. 8:19) in the prodigies of Moses, and Christ cast out the demons “by the finger of God” (Luke 11:20). This expression, consequently, is very proper when applied to the Holy Ghost to mean that through Him all the marvels of God take place, especially in the order of grace and sanctification.

7) *Guest of the soul.* In the sequence of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost is called “sweet guest of the soul”: *dulcis hospes animae*. The dwelling of God in the soul of the just corresponds equally to the three Divine Persons of the most Holy Trinity, because it is an operation *ad extra* (cf. John 14:23; I Cor. 3:16-17). However, as it is a work of *love*, and such works are attributed in a particular way to the Holy Ghost, He is considered in a very special way as the most sweet guest of our souls (cf. I Cor. 6:19).

8) *Seal.* St. Paul says that we have been “signed with the holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13) and that “he that confirmeth us with you in Christ, and that hath anointed us, is God: who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts” (II Cor. 1:21-22).

9) *Union, Link, Bond, Kiss.* These are names which express the inseparable and intimate union between the Father and the Son, by virtue of the Holy Ghost, Who proceeds from the two by a common spiration of love.

10) *Live Fountain, Fire, Charity, Spiritual Unction.* Expressions of the hymn *Veni, Creator*, these fit very well with the character and personality of the Holy Ghost.

11) *Most blessed Light, Father of the poor, Giver of gifts, Light of Hearts.* Holy Church applies all these expressions to the Holy Ghost in the magnificent sequence of Pentecost, the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*.

These are the principal names that Sacred Scripture, Christian tradition and Church liturgy appropriate to the Holy Ghost on account of the great affinity or similarity that exists between them and the proper characters of the third person of the Holy Trinity. All of them, well meditated upon,

contain great practical teachings for intensifying in our souls the love and veneration owed to the sanctifying Spirit, to whose perfect docility and obedience is linked the progressive and ascendant march toward the highest holiness.

4

The Holy Ghost in Jesus Christ

HAVING briefly studied the person of the Holy Ghost in the bosom of the Blessed Trinity, using scriptural facts and the different names by which He is called in Scripture and the tradition and liturgy of the Church, we shall now examine His principal operations in the Person of Jesus Christ, in the Church and in the interior of faithful souls.

We begin with Our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Let us reverently approach the Divine Person of the Word Incarnate that we may contemplate something of the marvels the Holy Ghost realized in Him in the Incarnation and throughout His life.¹

The main episodes of the life of Jesus in which the Holy Ghost more especially concurred are His incarnation, sanctification, baptism in the Jordan, temptations in the desert, transfiguration, miracles, evangelical doctrine and all His human activities.

Incarnation

Undoubtedly, the masterpiece of the Holy Ghost is His decisive cooperation in the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Word in the virginal womb of Mary. In reality, the Incarnation of the Word is a divine operation *ad extra* and, consequently, common to the three Divine Persons. We must say immediately, however, that this work had as its final end solely the Word,

1. Cf. Arrighini, *Il Dio ignoto*, pp. 153 ff.; Marmion, O.S.B., *Christ, the Life of the Soul*, pt. I, sec. VI. We reproduce some passages verbatim.

the Son of God, Who alone was incarnate.² Though it is a work performed together by the three Divine Persons, it is attributed especially to the Holy Ghost. This is a fitting and reasonable *appropriation* since the Incarnation of the Word is the greatest proof of love that God has given His rational creatures, to the point that this filled Christ Himself with admiration: “*God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son*” (John 3:16). Thus, it is not surprising that it is attributed particularly to the Holy Ghost, Who is substantial Love personified, the infinite Love in the bosom of the Blessed Trinity. Christian tradition has always recognized and proclaimed this since apostolic times, always repeating in the Creed: “I believe . . . in Jesus Christ . . . , Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.” The Creed does nothing else but repeat the words addressed to Mary by the angel of the Annunciation: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

Thus the third Person of the Holy Trinity becomes marvelously fruitful, in no less a measure than the other two Persons. In fact, while the fruitfulness of the Father appears clearly in the eternal generation of the Son and that of the Son in the procession of the Holy Ghost together with the Father, the Holy Ghost remained apparently sterile, since it is impossible to produce a fourth person in the Trinity. Now when the Virgin Mary consented with her fiat to the incarnation of the Word by action of the Holy Ghost, She became the mystical spouse of the same Divine Spirit and made Him divinely fruitful in a most pure and holy way, both real and true. It is certain and evident that the Holy Ghost did not create the divinity of the Word but, rather, only the humanity of Jesus in order to unite it hypostatically to the Word. Nor did He create the humanity with His own divine substance—which would be monstrous and absurd—but, rather, used His divine power over the virginal flesh and blood of the immaculate Mother of God. St. Ambrose expressed the great mystery with these simple and brief words: “How did Mary conceive of the Holy Ghost? If it were of His same divine substance, it would be necessary to say that the spirit became flesh and bones. However, it was not so, but only by His operation and

2. Marmion uses the following image employed by some Fathers of the Church: “A person in putting on his own vestments is helped in this action by two other persons: all three concur in the accomplishment of this action, but only one is adorned in these vestments” (*Christ, the Life of the Soul*, pp. 98-99). He adds the caution that the image is obviously an imperfect one.

power.’³ In this way, the saintly doctor continues, from the immaculate flesh of a living virgin, the Holy Ghost formed the second Adam, just as God, the Creator, formed the first from virgin soil.

Sanctification

Catholic theology teaches and it is also the official doctrine of the Church that aside from the grace called *of union* or *hypostatic*, by virtue of which Christ is *personally* the Son of God, His most holy soul possesses with an immense plenitude *habitual* or *sanctifying* grace, whose effusion in the soul of Christ is also attributed to the Holy Ghost.⁴

For some understanding of this doctrine, we must bear in mind that, as Dom Marmion explains:

In Jesus Christ there are two distinct natures, both perfect, but united in the Person who embraces them, namely, the Word. It is the “grace of union” that causes human nature to subsist in the Divine Person of the Word; this grace is of an altogether unique, transcendent and incommunicable order [Christ alone possesses it]; through it, the humanity of Christ belongs to the Word; it has become the humanity of the true Son of God and the object of the Eternal Father’s infinite delight. But the human nature, while being thus united to the Word, is not annihilated and does not remain in immobility: it retains its essence, its integrity, as likewise its energies and capacities; it is capable of action; now, it is “sanctifying grace” that raises this human nature so that it can act supernaturally.

To state the same idea in other terms, the grace of hypostatic union unites the human nature to the Person of the Word and thus renders everything divine in Christ; Christ *is*, by this grace a divine “subject”; this is the work of the grace of union of which the character is unique. But it is befitting that this human nature should also be adorned with “sanctifying grace” in order to *operate* divinely in each of its faculties. This sanctifying grace which is con-natural to the “grace of union,” (that is to say which is derived from the grace of union in a manner as it were natural) places the soul of Christ in the state befitting its union with the Word; this is done in such a way that the human nature—which subsists in the Word by virtue of the “grace of union”—can act as befits a soul raised to so eminent a dignity, and can produce Divine fruit.

3. St. Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto*, II, 5.

4. We have extensively covered everything regarding the grace of Christ—of union, sanctifying and capital—in another of our works published by the B.A.C. (Library of Christian Authors): *Jesucristo y la vida cristiana*, nn. 73-98.

And that is why sanctifying grace has not been given to the soul of Christ in a limited measure as it is with the elect, but carried to its highest degree: *Et vidimus eum plenum gratiae*. Now, the pouring forth of this sanctifying grace in the soul of Christ is attributed to the Holy Spirit.⁵

Christ applied to Himself in the synagogue of Nazareth the following Messianic text of Isaias: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke 4:18; cf. Isa. 61:1).

Our Lord made His own the words of Isaias which compared the action of the Holy Spirit to an unction. The grace of the Holy Spirit is poured forth upon Jesus, like an oil of gladness which first anointed Him Son of God and the Messiah, and then filled Him with the plenitude of His gifts and the abundance of divine treasures.⁶

We must not forget that sanctifying grace is never infused alone. It is always accompanied by the abounding cortege of the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The grace itself informs the essence of the soul, divinizing it and elevating it to the supernatural order, while the virtues and the gifts inform the different capacities to elevate them to the same plane and make them capable of producing supernatural or divine acts.

That is why the prophet Isaias, speaking of the future Messiah, announces the plenitude of the gifts which will enrich His most holy soul:

There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:1-3).

Christian tradition has always seen in this text the plenitude of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the most holy soul of Christ.

In no one else have such gifts ever produced such sublime fruits of holiness. Even as man, Jesus appears with a perfection that infinitely surpasses that of any other person however holy. St. Paul considers himself the least

5. *Christ, the Life of the Soul*, pp. 99-100. (Emphasis his.)

6. *Ibid.*, p. 100. In the Catholic liturgy (*Veni, Creator Spiritus*) the Holy Ghost is called spiritual unction ("*spiritalis unctio*").

of the apostles and unworthy of being called apostle (I Cor. 15:9). St. John affirms that if anyone considers himself without sin, he is deceiving himself and the truth is not in him (I John 1:8). “I do not know,” writes De Maistre, “how the heart of a wicked man would be; I only know that of an honest man and it is dreadful.”⁷ All upright consciences have always expressed themselves in a similar way. Not so Jesus Christ. There is no repentance, no desire of a better life in Him. He challenges His enemies: “Which of you shall convince me of sin?” (John 8:46), and neither the scribes nor the Pharisees, neither Pilate nor Herod, nor any of His great enemies have been able to surprise Him in the least sin. The holiness of Jesus has always triumphed: He is “holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26), adorned with all the gifts and overflowing with all the fruits of the Holy Ghost. All the virtues flourished in Him with like exuberance, unstained by the least blemish. He is perfect holiness, the very holiness of God.

Baptism

The treasures of holiness and grace we have just recalled were poured out by the Holy Ghost into the soul of Christ at the very moment of the Incarnation of the Word in the virginal womb of Mary—in a quiet way hidden from the eyes of the world. It was fitting that His infinite holiness be later manifested publicly and His divinity proclaimed by the Eternal Father Himself in the presence of the Holy Ghost. This was precisely what happened at the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.⁸ The Gospel scene is known by all:

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan, unto John, to be baptized by him. But John stayed him, saying: I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said to him: Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfill all justice. Then he suffered him. And Jesus being baptized, forthwith came out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened to him: and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him. And behold a voice from heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3:13-17).

7. Joseph de Maistre, *The St. Petersburg Dialogues*.

8. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 39, a. 8, ad 3.

The Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, considers it most fitting that the Holy Ghost descended over Jesus at the moment of His baptism in the form of a dove. In so doing, He indicated that everyone who receives the baptism of Christ becomes a temple and tabernacle of the Holy Ghost and must lead a life full of simplicity and candor, like that of a dove—as Christ Himself warns in the Gospel (Matt. 10:16).⁹ It was also most fitting that the voice of the Father be heard manifesting His pleasure over Him, because Christian baptism—prefigured by that of the Baptist—is hallowed by the invocation and the power of the Holy Trinity. And in Christ’s baptism the entire mystery of the Trinity shone forth: the voice of the Father, the presence of the Son, and the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove.¹⁰ Finally, it should be noted that the Father manifested Himself very appropriately by His voice since it is proper to the Father to produce the Word, that is, to utter or to speak. Hence, the same voice uttered by the Father gives testimony of the sonship of the Word.¹¹

Temptations in the Desert

The three synoptic evangelists—Matthew, Mark and Luke—narrate the mysterious scene of the temptations by the devil that Jesus suffered in the desert. The three tell us that He was led or driven to the desert by the Holy Ghost Himself. Behold their own words:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1).

And immediately the Spirit drove him out into the desert. And he was in the desert forty days and forty nights and was tempted by Satan (Mark 1:12-13).

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the desert, for the space of forty days; and was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-2).

The fact that He was driven by the Holy Ghost Himself to the desert “to be tempted by the devil” poses a series of theological difficulties that we must explain for the proper understanding of this mysterious scriptural passage.

9. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 6, ad 4.

10. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 8.

11. Cf. *ibid.*, ad 2.

In the first place, one may ask why the Holy Ghost led or drove Jesus to the desert. Was it necessary for the Son of God to do penance, to fast or, stranger yet, to be tempted by the devil? Evidently, the answer is no. St. Paul tells us that Jesus, being “holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens . . . needeth not daily (as the other priests) to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people’s” (Heb. 7:26). St. Paul gives us the true explanation when he tells us that He was tempted to help us vanquish temptations (Heb. 2:18) and to be compassionate of our weaknesses, having been similarly tempted in everything (Heb. 4:15).

In order to also provide an efficacious example of mortification, during the forty days he stayed in the desert He ate nothing (Luke 4:2). Yielding completely to the impulse of the Holy Ghost, Who transported Him to that uninhabited and cursed locale, He separated Himself completely from the outside world. Not feeling even the possession of a body that had to be fed and protected from the weather and beasts, He dedicated Himself entirely to prayer and to the serious thoughts that filled His spirit as He was about to begin His public mission among the chosen people. Recent discoveries have shown that man, even without supernatural help, can live six or seven weeks and even somewhat longer without receiving any nourishment. Nevertheless, there is a limit to such a situation when nature, having suffered violence, claims its rights with special energy. Wherefore St. Luke says expressly that at the end of the forty days, Jesus “was hungry” (Luke 4:2). This was the moment the devil chose to give a more precise and violent form to the temptations with which he had perhaps been assaulting Jesus since the first days of His retreat. It can be inferred from the same Gospel that those temptations occurred throughout the time Jesus spent in the desert (cf. Mark 1:13). The three temptations related by the evangelists and known by all took place at the end of the forty days. These would be a summary or reiteration of the prior ones.

As regards these mysterious temptations of Christ, we may also ask how much they could have influenced His soul, to what extremes the Holy Ghost would have abandoned Him in the hands of the spirit of evil, and to what extent that evil spirit would have offended Him.

To answer this question correctly, it is necessary to bear in mind that there are three principles from which derive the temptations which men suffer: the world, the flesh, and the devil, which are, consequently, the three main enemies of the soul.

Now, Christ could not suffer from the assaults of the second of these, for neither *fomes peccati* nor the slightest inclination to sin existed in Him (cf.

Denziger, 224). Nor could the pomps and vanities of the world affect Him because of His clear-sightedness and serenity of judgment. It is not unbecoming, however, that He should voluntarily submit to diabolical suggestion, as this is purely external to the person suffering it and does not suppose the least imperfection in him. All the malice in this temptation belongs exclusively to the tempter.¹²

In any case, the theological explanation of this question involves a great difficulty, since it is intimately linked to the mystery of the hypostatic union and that of the essential union of the three Divine Persons between Themselves. It is obvious that if we suppose that the soul of Christ is always equally and necessarily illuminated by the direct communication of the Word and by the effusion of the Holy Ghost, the temptation could be neither dangerous nor meritorious for Him; it would not be a struggle but, rather, the simple appearance of a struggle, a useless and deceitful phantasmagoria. If the divine irradiation maintains itself constantly and with the same intensity in the depths of the Savior's conscience, there is no real meaning to the manifestations of joy or sadness so deeply expressed in the Gospel, including that last and supreme cry of anguish: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46).

How can all this be explained? Theologians of all schools agree that in the hours of trial, the Divinity would retreat—so to speak—to the superior part of the soul of Christ and cover Itself as though with a veil. In other words, the Word and the other two Divine Persons would suspend their luminous communication and leave the human soul of Christ as if on its own. Consider the case of when a mother seems to leave her child unaided as he tests his own strength when taking his first steps. Apparently withdrawing the protection of her maternal hands, she in fact remains alert and watchful lest the child fall to the ground should he trip as he begins to walk or overcome some obstacle. Obviously, if the child succeeds in walking without falling or stumbling, the victory and merit are his, regardless of being assured the protection of the motherly arms. In the temptations of Jesus, the presence of the Word and of the other two Persons of the Trinity always guaranteed the most resounding and absolute triumph; nevertheless, the momentary isolation in which They left His human soul established a true merit and an unquestionable triumph for it. In those moments of trial, Jesus seemed to lose His divine powers, keeping only the weakness of the slave; but His most holy humanity

12. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 41, a.1, ad 3.

was so pure and was so well protected by the Divinity that it remained absolutely impeccable.

This understood, the main reasons why Christ wished to truly submit to the temptations of Satan are these:

- a) That He might strengthen us against temptations;
- b) That no one, however holy, might consider himself safe or free from temptations;
- c) That He might teach us the way to defeat temptations;
- d) That He might inspire us with confidence in His mercy, according to the words of St. Paul: "For we have not a high priest, who can not have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin" (Heb. 4:15).¹³

Transfiguration on Tabor

The synoptic Gospels describe in detail the dazzling scene of Christ's transfiguration on a "high mountain," probably Mount Tabor. In the presence of Peter, James and John, Christ's face became resplendent like the sun, and His garments turned as white as snow. Instants later a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice came from it saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him" (Matt. 17:1-9).

Why did Jesus want to thus transfigure Himself in the presence of His three preferred disciples? Undoubtedly, the immediate historical reason was to lift the depressed souls of those disciples, to whom He had just announced His coming passion and death (cf. Matt. 16:21). He had also just told them: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Faced with such a hard outlook, it is natural that the disciples would experience some discouragement and sadness. To raise their spirits, Christ showed them in the transfiguration the immense glory that awaited them if they remained faithful until death.¹⁴

However, what we wish to emphasize here is the presence of the entire Blessed Trinity in the scene on Tabor. The voice of the Father is heard (as at the baptism of Jesus) in the presence of His beloved Son and the Holy Ghost,

13. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 1.

14. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 45, a. 1.

Who is symbolized by the bright cloud. Let us hear the Angelic Doctor present this doctrine:

Just as in the Baptism, where the mystery of the first regeneration was proclaimed, the operation of the whole Trinity was made manifest, because the Son Incarnate was there, the Holy Ghost appeared under the form of a dove, and the Father made Himself known in the voice; so also in the transfiguration, which is the mystery of the second regeneration, the whole Trinity appears—the Father in the voice, the Son in the man, the Holy Ghost in the bright cloud; for just as in baptism He confers innocence, signified by the simplicity of the dove, so in the resurrection will He give His elect the clarity of glory and refreshment from all sorts of evil, which are signified by the bright cloud.¹⁵

Miracles

As we have seen, Jesus, in the synagogue of Nazareth, applied to Himself the following Messianic text of Isaias:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart. To preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward (Luke 4:18-19).

The Holy Ghost is indeed over Jesus as He performs His great prodigies and miracles, as is clear from His manner of doing them: as owner and lord of the nature that the Holy Ghost, with His creative breath, had vivified since the beginning; effortlessly, with the same calm with which He announced the beatitudes to the people, without needing to implore anyone or have recourse to heavenly assistance. In this He was unlike the saints who performed miracles, for in them the gifts of the Holy Ghost are found in a limited and transitory way. It is enough for Him to utter a word, to make a gesture. He says to the leper: "I will, be thou made clean." In the same instant, the leper is cleansed (Matt. 8:2-3). He orders the crippled man: "Rise and walk," and He is immediately obeyed (John 5:8-9). He shouts to Lazarus: "Come forth!" and the putrid dead man rises from his tomb full of health and life (John 11:43-44). It suffices that He stretch out His hand, and the storm is calmed,

15. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 4, ad 2.

water becomes wine, bread and fish multiply, demons flee, angels descend from paradise . . .

Let it be noted also that Jesus performs all this, not for someone else's glory, to prove the truth of somebody else's message, or to inspire confidence toward heaven. He does this for His own glory, to prove the truth of His own religion, to inspire faith and trust in Himself so that He, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, with Whom He is one, be recognized, loved and adored. He proclaims Himself, no less than the Father and the Holy Ghost, the source of those prodigies and exclaims: "He that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do; and even greater than these shall he do. Because I go to the Father" (John 14:12). And, in fact, the apostles and other saints have also performed great prodigies—perhaps even greater than those of Christ, although always in the name of Christ, by the virtue of Christ; by faith in Jesus Christ, *in fide nomini ejus*. (Acts 3:16), while Jesus performed them by His own virtue, by His own faith, by His own divine power, by the Holy Ghost, Who is and lives in Him (Luke 4:18). If He baptizes, if He expels demons from the possessed, if He heals the sick, if He confers the power to forgive sins, it is always by virtue of the Holy Ghost, with Whom He is one in union with the Father. Because of this, He wants to be adored and glorified, to the point of affirming solemnly:

Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him, but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come (Matt. 12:31-32).

Evangelical Doctrine

The hovering of the Holy Ghost, with His gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge and counsel, is felt continually in the sublime doctrine of Christ, whose words are full of the Divine Spirit in their form and in their substance or content.

Firstly, in their external form: Never were more sublime thoughts, more profound concepts, expressed in fewer words; and never were the words—so heavy and material in themselves—which are the despair of writers, more idealized and vivified in a thought. The splendid affirmation of Jesus Christ Himself, "My words are spirit and life" (John 6:63) is not hyperbolic but, rather,

the exact expression of the most august reality. Science is yet unable to enclose the immense wealth of human knowledge in a small volume; but Jesus Christ successfully encompassed, in a few clear, distinct, and radiant words, the eternal laws of things, the fundamental principles of individuals and peoples, and the life and indefinite progress of humanity.

Another impressive characteristic of Christ's doctrine is its universality. It belongs not to any given country; it is for all the nations. It has no age; it is for all times. Christ preached His doctrine in Palestine twenty centuries ago, but, even today, there is no need to change any of His speeches, parables, maxims or sublime teachings. This is so because His doctrine is nothing else but the genuine expression of the truth, and truth never changes no matter how much the places or times might change.

The doctrine of the Gospel reveals itself divine and truly replete with the Holy Ghost in its very substance as well. Each phrase contains treasures of infinite wisdom, always new and marvelous seeds of life. Christ said: "Blessed are the poor, They who mourn; They that suffer persecution for justice' sake." What marvelous seeds! Who can appraise the rich harvest they have produced? From them have come the apostles, the martyrs, the virgins, the greatest benefactors of humanity. Jesus decreed: "Render to God the things that are God's, and to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and thus He established the fundamental bases of the two powers from which human civilization proceeds. He has proclaimed: "All you are brethren," thus drawing the great lines of social equality. He also said: "Our Father, who art in heaven . . .," opening the hearts and lips of all to the holiest and most efficacious of all prayers. It has been rightly said that each of His words encloses a seed of unlimited progress. Humanity advances—quickly, unceasingly. It blesses and acclaim its passing geniuses and heroes who rise to guide it. Very soon, however, it forgets and abandons them. Plato's philosophy had great success in other times, but it does not suffice today. Newton's science was admirable, but was surpassed. Cuvier's geology started a revolution, but no one remembers it anymore. Aristotle, Copernicus, Galileo, Leibniz, . . . All have been surpassed. Only Jesus and His doctrine, declares Renán himself,¹⁶ will never be surpassed. What man, what era, what philosophical system has been able to surpass His thought or, at least, has known how to understand it completely and apply it perfectly to life? May the world answer with its cry of anguish. Men have divided Jesus' garments, they have cast lots over His

16. In *The Life of Jesus*.

seamless tunic, but is perchance the spirit that moved so energetically in Him, exhausted, possessed or understood entirely? Absolutely not. It remains and will always remain, inexhausted and inexhaustible, because it is infinite like God, eternal like truth; because it is nothing else but the Holy Ghost.

The apostles themselves, disciples of the divine Master, did not always succeed in understanding Him, and for this reason the Master left the task of completing His teachings to the Holy Ghost: "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (John 14:26). Jesus leaves to the Holy Ghost the charge and the glory of completing His doctrine, of deriving its last consequences, of applying it practically. This, as is known, is always the most difficult part, and can be fittingly carried out only by the originator of the doctrine. Indeed, the evangelical doctrine proceeded no less from the Word than from the Holy Ghost, being as They are one with the Father.

Human Activities

The Gospels show us how the soul of Jesus Christ, in all of its activity, obeyed the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit—as we have seen—leads Him into the desert where He will be tempted by the demon (Matt. 4:1). After the forty days in the desert, the same Spirit leads Him to Galilee (Luke 4:14). By the action of this Spirit, He expels demons from the bodies of the possessed (Matt. 12:28). Under the action of the Holy Ghost, He rejoices when He thanks His Father for revealing the divine secrets to the little ones (Luke 10:21). Finally, St. Paul tells us that Christ's masterpiece—in which His love of the Father and His charity toward us shine the most—namely, His bloody sacrifice upon the cross for the world's salvation, was offered by Christ at the impulse of the Holy Ghost: "Who by the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted unto God" (Heb. 9:14).

What do all these revelations show? That in Christ, the human activity was directed by the Spirit of love. The One Who acts is Christ, the Incarnate Word. All His actions are the actions of the one Person of the Word in Whom the human nature subsists; but it is under the inspiration, by the promptings of the Holy Spirit, that Christ acted. The human soul of Jesus had, through the grace of the hypostatic union, become the soul of the Word; it was filled like to none other with sanctifying grace, and lastly, it acted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

by their mouth and gives value to their testimony (cf. John 15:26; Acts 15:28; 20:22-28). In the same way, the authentic means that Christ has given to His ministers, whereby they may transmit life to souls, namely the Sacraments, are never conferred without the Holy Spirit being invoked. It is He who fructifies the waters of baptism; it is necessary "to be born again of water and the Holy Ghost to enter into the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5); St. Paul says that God saves us "by the laver of regeneration" in renewing us by the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5). In Confirmation, the Holy Ghost is "given" to be the unction which is to make the Christian a valiant soldier of Jesus Christ; it is the Holy Ghost Who, in this sacrament, gives us the fullness of the state of Christian and clothes us in Christ's own strength. It is to the Holy Ghost, as is especially shown in the Easter liturgy, that the change is attributed whereby the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Sins are forgiven, in the Sacrament of Penance, by the Holy Ghost (John 20:22-23). In Extreme Unction, He is besought that His *grace* may cure the sick of their languors and sins. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, the Holy Ghost is invoked in order that the Christian bridegroom and bride may, by their lives, imitate the union that exists between Christ and the Church.

Do you not see how full of life, how penetrating and constant is the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church? Yes, He is indeed, as St. Paul says, "the Spirit of Life" (Rom. 8:2), a truth the Church repeats in her *Credo* when she chants her faith in "the Holy Ghost . . . the life-giver": *Credo . . . in Spiritum Sanctum . . . vivificantem*; He is truly the soul of the Church. He is the vital principle animating and governing her, uniting all her members one with another and giving them spiritual strength and beauty.

In the first days of the Church's existence, this action was much more visible than in our own days; it entered into the designs of Providence, for it was necessary that the Church should be firmly established by manifesting, in the sight of the pagan world, striking signs of the Divinity of her Founder, of her origin and mission. These signs, the fruits of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, were wonderful. We marvel when we read the account of the beginnings of the Church. The Holy Spirit descended upon those who through Baptism were made Christ's disciples. He filled them with "charismata" as numerous as they were astonishing: graces of miracles, gifts of prophecy, gifts of tongues and many other extraordinary favors granted to the first Christians in order that the Church, adorned with such an abundance of eminent gifts, might be recognized as the true Church of Jesus. Read in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians how the great Apostle rejoices in enumerating these marvels of which he was himself a witness; and at almost each enumeration of these various gifts, he adds: but it is "the same Spirit" Who is the source of them because He is Love and love is the principle of all these gifts. *In eodem Spiritu* (I Cor. 12:4-13). He it is Who makes fruitful this Church which Jesus has redeemed by His blood that it might "be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).¹

1. Cf. *Christ, the Life of the Soul*, pp. 103-105.

We will now explain, with strict theological precision, in what sense the Holy Ghost is and can be called the Soul of the Church.

It is evident, first of all, that the Holy Ghost is not and cannot be the *substantial form* of the Church as the soul is of the human body it informs. The soul, as is known and has been defined by the Church, is the *substantial form* of the human body which it animates (cf. Denz. 481). As such a form, it has the mission of *informing*, that is, to give the body its being of human body, to form with it a one and only being, specifically and numerically determined by the soul itself. Clearly, the Holy Ghost cannot be the soul of the Church in this sense, because aside from the form being *part* of a composite (and God cannot be part of anything or anybody), it would follow that the Church would have a substantially *divine* being, as it would form one same substance with its form; in other words, the Church would be God, which is heretical and absurd.

Besides, the function of *informing* or giving the body the being it has and forming with it a substantive unity, the soul possesses and develops other functions, such as *unifying, vivifying and moving* the parts of the body. This the Holy Ghost can do and does as the *Soul of the Church*. Let us consider this in detail:²

The Holy Ghost Unifies the Church

In the Church there is a great diversity of members. There is hierarchical diversity, charismatic diversity, sanctifying diversity. There are those who govern and those who obey; among the former, one governs with universal power while others do so with limited power: Pope, bishops, priests. There are also those who have different charisms: some perform miracles, some prophecy, some teach. Furthermore, there are different degrees of sanctity: some possess sanctifying grace in its most sublime manifestations; others are less saintly; and there is no lack of those who have the minimum necessary to be saved or even less. There are very holy saints; there are the just who limit themselves to being in the state of grace; and there are sinners.

Despite such diversity, there exists an intimate unity between all of them. Christ requested it for those who were to be His members: "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one

2. Cf. Emilio Sauras, O.P., *El Cuerpo místico de Cristo* (Madrid: B.A.C., 1956), 2d ed., pp. 752 ff., where this question is amply studied. Pages 781-84 are partially reproduced herein.

in us. . . . And the glory which thou that hast given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, as we also are one" (John 17:21-22). It is worth noting that the unity Christ requests for His Church has a resemblance to His and the Father's.

Christ and the Father have many reasons for union. They possess one same Divine nature, numerically identical; the first is united to the second because He is His subsistent Word. But the Holy Ghost gives a special reason to the union between the two Persons. In the mystery of the Trinity, the Father and the Son, compared with each other, are distinct: the Father begets, and the Son is begotten. But compared with the Holy Ghost, They constitute one same and identical spirative principle. They are one in the spirative action, from which proceeds the third Person.

Significantly, love is appropriated to the third Person, and Christ wants the union that should exist between those who form His mystical body to be one of love: "I have made known thy name to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). All this seems to mean that the union in the Church, a union similar to that between the Father and the Son, should resemble the union that exists between Them in Their relationship with the Holy Ghost. Love unifies the Church, and the Holy Ghost unifies it through love. Thus, the members of the mystical Body unite where the Father and Son are unified, namely, in the Holy Ghost. St. Paul says this very clearly when, after mentioning the many charisms and their ministries in Christian society, he writes: "In one spirit were we all baptized into one body" (I Cor. 12:13).

The Holy Ghost Vivifies the Church

The Church is a *living* being, in the authentic sense of the word. It is a true *mystical body* and the mystical or supernatural character is founded in a divine and vivifying element.

All societies constituted by men have life *in a certain sense*: They move, they progress, they improve. But, in reality, the principle that animates them is *outside* them. This principle is their end, and the end is an extrinsic cause. This does not match the definition of life—that of movement which proceeds *from inside*. Nor does the life of societies come from the individuals who form them. These individuals manifest it; they are the members who profit from it. The life of these societies proceeds from the end, which is assimilated more

or less, is operating more or less, in each of those who advance to it. Yet, the end is always an extrinsic cause. Hence, it is not *exact* to say that societies are live organisms.

The Church, on the other hand, is indeed a living organism for it has an *intrinsic* vivifying principle. The Holy Ghost is not only end and goal. He is also the Church's animating principle, the immanent or internal, albeit not formal, principle. The Spirit is a live and vivifying principle. He participates in the appearance of Christ on earth, actively making Mary fruitful, and participates in the birth of the Church. Pentecost was the official proclamation of the society established by Christ, and on that day Mary and the Holy Ghost figure in the official birth of this society, just as They did in the birth of Christ. The Church is born with its baptism, as we are born with ours; and the baptism of the Church was that of Pentecost. Referring to that day, Jesus said to His disciples when taking leave of them before ascending into heaven: "John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). It is true that Christ instituted the Church before the Ascension, but its birth certificate is given on the day that the Spirit descends upon Mary and the Apostles.

The Holy Ghost is also the one who vivifies each of the members who constitute the Church. In Him we are baptized; He it is, therefore, Who gives us the vital principle, that is, divine grace, and because He gives it to us, He makes us children of God: "For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:15).

It is the Spirit who gives life to the Church and to each of its members. And He gives it not from outside, as the end gives it to earthly societies, but from inside, as the soul gives it. When we say the Holy Ghost begets and vivifies we do not wish to say that He does this without penetrating the begotten and vivified. He is in them, He dwells in them, because while leaving them vivifying grace, He remains with the other two Divine Persons, as we will see later.

The Holy Ghost Moves and Governs the Church

Lastly, just as the soul moves and governs the body, so the Holy Ghost moves and governs the Church. To govern it is necessary to know and to love.

It is the Holy Ghost who infuses knowledge of the supernatural (faith) and who gives divine love (charity) to Christians. He intervenes also, as we have already said, in the designation of the hierarchs (cf. Acts 20:28). And when the Apostle points out the different offices in the Church, he adds: "But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will" (I Cor. 12:11).

It is unnecessary to add any more. If He is the one who governs and moves the members of the mystical Body of Christ, who unifies them, who vivifies them; and if He does all this *from inside*, dwelling in each member and in all the Body, we must conclude that he performs *authentic functions of a soul*. Already the genius of St. Augustine had intuited this truth when he wrote resolutely: "What the soul is to the body of man, the Holy Ghost is to the Body of Christ that is the Church."³

The official magisterium of the Church has also applied to the Holy Ghost the expression *Soul of the Church* in the sense just explained. See, for example, the following text of Pius XII in his magistral encyclical *Mystici Corporis*:

To this Spirit of Christ, also, as to an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the Body are joined one with the other and with their exalted Head; for He is entire in the Head, entire in the Body, and entire in each of the members. To the members He is present and assists them in proportion to their various duties and offices, and the greater or lesser degree of spiritual health which they enjoy. It is He who through His heavenly grace is the principle of every supernatural act in all parts of the Body. It is He who while He is personally present and divinely active in all the members, nevertheless in the inferior members acts also through the ministry of the higher members. Finally, while by His grace He provides for the continual growth of the Church, He yet refuses to dwell through sanctifying grace in those members that are wholly severed from the Body. This presence and activity of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is tersely and vigorously described by Our predecessor of immortal memory Leo XIII in his Encyclical Letter *Divinum Illud* in these words: "Let it suffice to say that, as Christ is the Head of the Church, so is the Holy Spirit her soul."⁴

Vatican Council II once more consecrated this magnificent doctrine in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church:

3. "*Quod anima est hominis corpori, Spiritus Sanctus est corpori Christi, id est Ecclesiae.*" *Serm.* 186 *de tempore* (P.L. 38: 1231).

4. *Mystici Corporis*, n. 57, *A.A.S.* 35 (1943), pp. 219-20.

The Head of this Body is Christ. . . . In order that we may be unceasingly renewed in Him (cf. Eph. 4:23), He has shared with us His Spirit who, existing as one and the same being in the head and in the members, vivifies, unifies and moves the whole body. This He does in such a way that His work could be compared by the holy Fathers with *the function which the soul fulfills in the human body, whose principle of life the soul is.*⁵

After this quick overview of the presence and action of the Holy Ghost in all the Church of Christ, let us now see them in each of the Church's members in particular. But this requires a separate chapter.

5. Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, chap. 1, n. 7.

6

The Holy Ghost in Us

IN this chapter, we take up one of the holiest and most sublime themes of all sacred theology: the dwelling of the Holy Ghost in the soul justified by grace.

It is necessary, first of all, to have very clear ideas about the intimate nature of sanctifying grace, the base and foundation of the dwelling of the Holy Ghost and the entire Blessed Trinity in the justified soul. Therefore, we are going to pause for an exposition of the fundamental principles of the theology of grace, even if risking a small digression which we deem very necessary, practical and profitable.

SANCTIFYING GRACE

We will present briefly its *nature* and the main *effects* it produces in our souls.

What Is Grace?

Sanctifying grace can be defined as *a supernatural gift infused by God in our souls to give us a true and real participation in His own Divine nature and to make us His children and heirs of glory.*

We are going to explain the definition word by word for a better understanding of its splendid reality.

a) *It is a gift.* Grace is an immense gift of God, a totally and absolutely gratuitous gift that no one has a right to claim under a purely natural viewpoint. Once gratuitously possessing that immense gift, we

can negotiate with it and *merit* increases of grace and eternal glory itself, as we will see later. But before possessing grace, absolutely no one can *merit it*, although we can humbly ask God for it with confident and persevering prayer. A beautiful and consoling theological aphorism says: “God denies not His grace to whomever does what he can [with the help of the same prevenient grace].”

b) *It is a supernatural gift.* Supernatural means that it is *over*, above nature. So much is grace above that it is a *Divine* reality, infinitely superior to all created or creatable nature.

In effect: If we echelon all God’s creatures in their different levels, known by us through natural light and Divine revelation, we find the following five, from lesser to higher:

1. Minerals. They are in the lowest category. They exist, but do not live.

2. Plants. They live, but do not feel or understand.

3. Animals. They live and feel, but do not understand or think.

4. Men. As St. Gregory says, man is a kind of microcosm (a world in miniature), summarizing and containing all other created beings: He *exists*, like the minerals; *lives*, like the plants; *feels*, like the animals; and *understands*, like the angels.

5. Angels. Pure spirits, they do not have a body or any admixture of matter and are, therefore, *naturally* superior to men, as they are closer to God’s own being.

To which of these levels or categories does habitual or sanctifying grace belong? To none of them, because it transcends and surpasses all of them. Grace, as we will explain immediately, is a *Divine* reality that, for this very reason, belongs to the plane of Divinity and is a thousand times above all created beings, including the angels themselves. It is an absolutely *supernatural* reality; in other words, it is above, surpasses and transcends *all nature*, created or creatable. This is why the least participation of sanctifying grace is worth infinitely more than the whole universal creation, that is, the ensemble of God’s creatures that have existed, exist or will exist until the end of time.¹

c) *Infused by God.* Only God, author of the supernatural order, can infuse it in the soul. All the creatures of the universe combined could

1. Because of this St. Thomas says that “the good of *grace* in one is greater than the good of *nature* in the whole universe” (*Summa*, I-II, q. 113, a. 9, ad 2).

never produce the least participation in the very nature of God, which is precisely what sanctifying grace communicates to us.

d) *In our souls.* Grace is a spiritual reality that resides in the soul, not in the body. Because it is spiritual, it cannot be seen, nor touched, nor heard. Neither *thought* nor *love* can be seen or touched, yet it is an authentic reality that we think and love.

e) *To give us a true and real participation in His own Divine nature.* This is the first and greatest prerogative of the grace of God, and will be explained in detail when we treat of the effects of grace in our souls.

f) *It makes us true children of God.* This is a necessary consequence of the fact that sanctifying grace makes us participants in the *very nature of God*. Without this participation we would be merely *creatures of God*, but in no way His *children*.

Indeed, to be a *father* it is necessary to transmit to another being one's specific nature. The sculptor who carves a statue is not the father of that inanimate work but only the *author*. On the other hand, the authors of our time are truly our natural *parents*, because they truly transmitted to us, by way of generation, their own human nature.

It is true that God does not transmit to us, through grace, His own Divine nature by *natural* generation—as the Father does to the Son in the bosom of the Blessed Trinity—but rather in a partial form and by way of non-natural *adoption*. For we are not to believe that this *Divine adoption* through grace is of the same nature as human adoption: It is not so at all. When a child without father and mother is legally adopted by a charitable family, he receives from it a series of goods and advantages, the more noticed being the name of the adopting family and the right to the possessions assigned to him in inheritance. But there is one thing the family does not and cannot ever give him: the *blood* of the family. The poor child has the blood he received from his *natural* parents, but never that of his adoptive parents. On the contrary, when God adopts us by grace, He not only gives us the name of the Divine family—*children of God*—and the right to future inheritance—heaven—but He communicates to us *His own Divine nature* in a very real and true way. Speaking metaphorically—since God has no blood—to capture a sublime reality, we could say that grace is *a transfusion of divine blood in our souls*. By virtue of that divine transfusion, of that divine graft, the soul becomes in such a way a participant of the very life of God that it not only gives us the right to be *called* children of God but

makes us such in reality. Thus, the Evangelist St. John exclaims in amazement: “Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be *called* and should *be* the sons of God” (I John 3:1).

And the apostle St. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans:

For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the *spirit of adoption* of sons, whereby we cry: *Abba* (Father). For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the *sons of God*. And if sons, *heirs* also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:15-17).

Through grace, consequently, we are truly children of God by adoption, but a kind of *intrinsic* adoption, which truly incorporates us into the family of God as true children.

g) *Makes us heirs of heaven*. This is another natural and inevitable consequence of our divine adoptive filiation. St. Paul reminds us in the words just quoted that, if sons of God, heirs also (cf. Rom. 8:17).

How greatly this adoption through grace differs from human and legal adoption! Among men, children inherit only at the death of the father, and the inheritance is less as the children are more numerous. But, our Father will live eternally, we shall possess with Him an inheritance that, in spite of the immense number of heirs, will never diminish or lessen. For this inheritance is basically infinite. It is God Himself, one in essence and three in persons, contemplated, loved and enjoyed with unutterable and inebriating delights that we, in this earthly life, cannot even imagine. All the internal riches of Divinity, *all that constitutes the happiness of God himself* and gives Him infinite and eternal enjoyment, the fathomless perfections of the Divinity will be communicated to us. Lastly, God will place at our disposition all His extrinsic goods: His honor, His glory, His dominions, His royalty and all the created goods that exist in the whole universe: “All things are yours, . . .” says St. Paul, “And you are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (I Cor. 3:22-23). This will cause the soul indescribable happiness, which will completely satisfy, with overflowing abundance, all its aspirations and longings.

And the soul in the state of grace will receive all that as inheritance due *in justice*; it has a *right* to it. Grace—as we explained before—is entirely gratuitous; it is an immense gift of God that absolutely no one can merit under the purely natural point of view; but once possessed

it gives us the capacity to *merit heaven* under the title of justice. There is as perfect a parallelism and correspondence between grace and heaven as there is between mortal sin and hell. Grace is like heaven in potentiality. Between grace and heaven there is only a non-essential difference of *degree*. It is the same supernatural life in its initial or terminal stage. The child does not differ specifically from the mature man; he is an adult in potency. The same is true of grace and glory, and thus St. Thomas could write with all theological exactitude that "grace is nothing else but the beginning of glory in us."²

Effects of Sanctifying Grace

a) *It divinizes us, making us partakers of the very nature of God.* This is the first and greatest of the effects sanctifying grace produces in our souls, and the root and foundation of all the others.

We could hardly believe this were it not clearly and expressly in divine revelation. The apostle St. Peter says that God "hath given us most great and precious promises: *that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature*" (II Pet. 1:4). The Fathers of the Church and modern exegesis itself have seen in these words a clear and obvious allusion to sanctifying grace.³ And the Church exclaims joyfully in its official liturgy: "He was lifted up into heaven *so that He might grant unto us a share in His own divinity.*"⁴

Does this mean that by grace man becomes *substantially divine* in the pantheistic sense of the expression? To say so would be a great error and real heresy. There is not and there cannot be a *substantial* change of human nature into divine substance. It is only a matter of *analogous* and *accidental* participation,⁵ by virtue of which, man, without ceasing

2. Cf. *Summa*, II-II, q. 24, a. 3, ad 2.

3. "The formula *physis divina*," writes a modern exegete, "designates the Divine Being, Divinity itself. It is the divine nature itself as opposed to everything that is not God. The lapidary formula of St. Peter is as clear as it is daring, because it clarifies the most splendid effect of sanctifying grace. . . . The Christian partakes of the *Divine nature* itself, or, in other words, of all the cumulation of perfections contained in a formal-eminent way in the Divine essence" (Salguero, O.P., in *Biblia comentada* [Madrid: B.A.C., 1965], VII, p. 156).

4. Preface of the Ascension.

5. We have explained all this at length in the *Theology of Christian Perfection* (New York: Foundation for a Christian Civilization, 1987), pp. 11-14.

to be such, becomes participant of the Divine nature in the measure possible to a mere creature. The Fathers of the Church usually present the image of a piece of iron placed in a lighted furnace: The iron retains the nature of iron, but acquires the properties of fire, becoming incandescent as it is. In a similar way, the soul, upon receiving the grace of God, continues to be substantially a human soul, but receives a true and real participation in the nature of God itself, because grace enables it to know and love God *as God knows and loves Himself*. And since the nature of God consists precisely in knowing and loving Himself *the divine way*, participating in this knowledge and love is to participate really and truly of His own Divine nature. The soul in the state of grace resembles God *precisely as God*, in other words, not only as a live and intelligent being, but in what makes God God and not something else, in His very own Divinity. With the exception of the *personal or hypostatic* union, which is proper and exclusive to Christ, it is impossible for a creature, human or angelic, to climb to an altitude higher than the one to which he is elevated by sanctifying grace.

The dignity of a soul in the state of grace is so great that all earthly grandeur vanishes before it like smoke. What is all creation compared to a beggar in rags who carries in his soul the treasure of sanctifying grace? The distance between him and a soul in mortal sin (without grace) is greater than that between him and the highest canonized saint and even the Blessed Virgin Mary. The simple possession of sanctifying grace elevates us to such eminent heights! It takes us beyond the frontiers of all natural creation, making us reach, in its eagle's flight, the level of Divinity itself: God Himself as He is in Himself.

The devil promised our first parents in paradise that if they ate of the forbidden tree they would "*be as Gods*" (Gen. 3:5). "It is Jesus Christ," says Malebranche, "who, by means of grace, fulfills in us the devil's magnificent promise."⁶

b) *It makes us brothers and co-heirs of Christ*. This is the third affirmation of St. Paul in the text of the epistle to the Romans we quoted before: "heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). This relationship derives immediately from the two that have already been mentioned. The reason, as St. Augustine points out, is that "he

6. Quoted by Father A. G. Sertillanges, O.P. (*Catechisme des incroyants*, [1930], p. 291).

who says 'Our Father' to the Father of Christ, what shall he say to Christ but 'brother?'⁷

By the very fact that sanctifying grace communicates to us a participation in the divine life that Christ possesses in all its plenitude, it necessarily follows that we become His brothers. He desired to be our brother according to His humanity, in order to make us His brothers according to His divinity, "that He might give us a share in His divinity."⁸ St. Paul states that God has predestined us "to be made conformable to the image of his Son; that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). It is evident that we are not brothers of Christ in nature, nor are we sons of God by the same form that He is such. Christ is the firstborn among many brothers and also the onlybegotten of the Father. In the order of nature He is the only Son; but in the order of grace and adoption He is our elder brother, as well as our Head and the cause of our salvation.

For this reason, the Father deigns to look upon us as if we were one with the Son. He loves us as He loves His Son; He looks on Christ as our brother and confers on us the title to the same inheritance. We are *co-heirs with Christ*. He has the natural right to the Divine inheritance, since He is the Son "whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world" (Heb. 1:2). For that reason,

It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, who had brought many children into glory, to perfect the author of their salvation, by his passion. For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them *brethren*, saying: "I will declare thy name to *my brethren*; in the midst of the church will I praise thee" (Heb. 2:10-12).

Therefore, the brothers of Christ must share with Him the love and the heritage of the heavenly Father. God has modeled us on Christ; with Christ, we are sons of the same Father who is in heaven. All this will be effected by realizing the supreme desire of Christ: that we be *one* with Him as He Himself is one with the Father (John 17:21-24).

c) *It instills in us the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.* Sanctifying grace is a supernatural quality infused into the very essence

7. St. Augustine, *In Io.*, tr. 21, n. 3 (M.L. 35: 1565).

8. Cf. Preface of the Ascension.

of our souls as a *static, habitual* element; it is not immediately operative. To act supernaturally, as our elevation to supernatural order by the same grace demands, we need operative faculties of strictly supernatural order that enable us to realize in a connatural and effortless way the supernatural actions proper to our condition as children of God. Such are the *infused virtues* and the *gifts of the Holy Ghost*, which are infused into us always together with sanctifying grace, from which they are inseparable⁹ and of whose *operative or dynamic* element they are. We will return to this at the appropriate time.

THE INDWELLING OF THE TRINITY

Sanctifying grace, as we have already said, gives us a true and real participation of the nature of God itself, and in this sense it can be called *divine* with all propriety and exactness. However, it is altogether obvious that it is not God Himself, but a reality *created* by God to make us participants of His own Divine nature in a mysterious though very real and true way.

This *created* reality that is sanctifying grace always carries, inseparably, another reality *absolutely divine and uncreated*. God Himself, one and trine, Who comes to dwell in the very depths of our souls.

We are going to study this august reality as amply as the scope of our work allows.¹⁰

Existence

The indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the soul of the just is one of the truths most clearly revealed in the New Testament,¹¹ which insists again and again on this sublime truth. This is evident from the following texts selected at random:

“If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

9. With the exception of faith and hope, which can subsist without grace in an *uninformed* manner; in other words, without any vitality of supernatural meritorious order.

10. We transcribe here what we wrote in the *Theology of Christian Perfection*, p. 23.

11. Although there are certain traces and vestiges of the trinitarian mystery—above all in the doctrine of the “Spirit of God” and of “Wisdom”—the full revelation of the mystery of the intimate life of God was reserved for the New Testament.

“God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him” (I John 4:16).

“Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are” (I Cor. 3:16-17).

“Or know you not, that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own?” (I Cor. 6:19).

“For you are the temple of the living God” (II Cor. 6:16).

“Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us” (II Tim. 1:14).

Scripture uses different formulas to express the same truth, namely, that God dwells in the soul in grace. This indwelling is attributed to the Holy Ghost, not because there is any *special* presence of the Holy Ghost that is not common to the Father and to the Son,¹² but by reason of an *appropriation*, since this is the great work of the love of God, and the Holy Ghost is essential love in the bosom of the Trinity. The Fathers of the Church, and especially St. Augustine, have written beautiful tracts on the indwelling of the Trinity in the souls of the just.

Nature

Theologians have written and disputed at length about the nature of the indwelling. Perhaps none of the theories offers an adequate explanation of the Divine indwelling. But what is important for the life of piety and the advance to perfection is not so much the nature or mysterious *mode* as the *fact* of the indwelling, and concerning this all Catholic theologians are in accord.

So, setting aside the various theories formulated to explain the *mode* of the Divine indwelling, we are going to show in what the presence of indwelling differs from the other presences of God pointed out by theology.

As many as *five* completely distinct presences of God can be distinguished:

12. Certain theologians (Lessius, Petau, Thomassinus, Scheeben, etc.) held this opinion, but the majority of theologians teach the contrary doctrine, which is deduced from the data of faith and the teaching of the Church. Cf. Denz. 281, 703; Terrien, *La Grace et la Gloire*, 1, 6, chap. 6 and appendix 5; Froget, *The Indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the Souls of the Just*, pp. 58 ff.; Galtier, *L'habitation en nous des trois Personnes* (Rome: 1949), I, chap. 1.

1. *Personal and Hypostatic Presence.* This is proper and exclusive to Jesus Christ. In Him the Divine Person of the Word does not reside as in a temple but constitutes His very personality, even as man. By virtue of the hypostatic union, Christ is a divine person and by no means a human person.

2. *Eucharistic Presence.* God is present in the Eucharist in a *special* manner exclusive to It. It is the Eucharistic *ubi*, which though directly and immediately affecting only the body of Christ, also affects indirectly the three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity: the Word because of His personal union with the humanity of Christ, and the Father and the Holy Ghost because of *circuminsession*, or the mutual presence of the three Divine Persons in each other, which makes Them absolutely inseparable.

3. *Presence of Vision.* God is present in every place, as we shall see immediately, but He does let Himself be seen in all of them. The beatific vision in heaven can be considered a special presence of God, distinct from the others. In heaven God is *letting Himself be seen*.

4. *Presence of Immensity.* One of God's attributes is His *immensity*, by virtue of which He is really omnipresent, and there can be no place or creature in which He is not present. This is so on three accounts:

a) *By essence*, in that God, without ceasing for an instant, is *giving being* to everything that exists, in a manner similar to that of a power station whose incessant flow of electricity maintains the continuous illumination of a light bulb. Were God to withdraw for an instant His conserving action from any being, that being would disappear *ipso facto* into nothingness, just as the bulb goes off instantly when its power is cut. In this sense, God is present even in a soul in mortal sin and in the devil himself, who could not exist without this divine presence.

b) *By presence*, in that God has continually before His eyes all created beings, without any of them being able to escape His divine gaze for even an instant.

c) *By potency*, in that God has all creatures under His power. With a simple word He created them and with a simple word He could annihilate them.

5. *Presence of Indwelling.* This is the *special* presence the one and triune God establishes in the souls justified by grace.

In what does this presence of *indwelling* differ from the general presence of *immensity*?

First of all, the special presence of indwelling presupposes the general presence of immensity, without which it would be impossible. However, it also adds two fundamentals to this general presence: Divine *paternity* and *friendship*. The first is based on *sanctifying grace* and the second on *charity*.

We are going to briefly explain these ineffable realities.

a) *Paternity*. As we said when dealing with sanctifying grace, properly speaking, it cannot be said that God is *father* of the creatures in the purely natural order. It is true that all of them have come from His creating hands, but this makes God their *author* or *creator*, not their *father*. The artist who carves a statue from a piece of wood or marble is the statue's *author*, but in no way its *father*. To be a father it is necessary to transmit one's own life, that is, one's specific nature, to another being of the same species.

For this reason, if God wanted to be our Father as well as our Creator, it was necessary that He transmit His own Divine nature in all its plenitude, as in the case of Jesus Christ, Son of God by nature, or at least a real and true *participation* in it (as in the case of the justified soul). By virtue of *sanctifying grace*, which gives us a mysterious but very real and true participation in the Divine nature itself, the justified soul becomes truly a *child of God* by an *intrinsic* adoption, far superior to purely legal and extrinsic human adoption. From that moment, God, Who already dwelled in the soul by His general presence of immensity, *is in it as father* and looks on it as a true child of His. This is the first aspect of the presence of indwelling, which is incomparably superior, as can be seen, to the mere presence of immensity. The presence of *immensity* is common to everything that exists (including the stones and even the demons). That of indwelling, on the other hand, is proper and exclusive to the children of God. Always supposing sanctifying grace, it could not occur without it.

b) *Friendship*. But sanctifying grace never comes alone. It brings with it the marvelous cortege of infused virtues, highlighting supernatural *charity* as the principal one. Charity establishes a true and mutual *friendship* between God and men: it is the very essence of

friendship.¹³ As such, when supernatural charity is infused into the soul together with sanctifying grace, God begins to be present in the soul in an entirely new way: no longer simply as *author*, but as a true *friend*. This is the second intimate aspect of the Divine indwelling.

The intimate presence of the one and triune God as *Father* and *friend*. . . Behold the colossal fact constituting the very essence of the dwelling of the Holy Trinity in the soul justified by grace and charity.

Purpose

The trinitarian dwelling in our souls has a very high purpose. How could it be otherwise? It is the great gift of God, the first and greatest of all possible gifts, since it gives us the real and true possession of the infinite being of God Himself. Sanctifying grace, itself an inestimable gift, is worth infinitely less than the Divine indwelling. The latter is named in theology *uncreated* grace, whereas habitual or sanctifying grace is designated *created* grace. There is an abyss between a creature, perfect as it may be, and the Creator Himself.

The indwelling in the Christian is equivalent to the hypostatic union in the Person of Christ, even though it is not the indwelling but sanctifying grace that formally constitutes us adopted children of God. Sanctifying grace formally penetrates and imbues our souls, *divinizing* them. The Divine indwelling is like the incarnation or insertion in our souls of the absolutely Divine: of the very being of God, such as He is in Himself, one in essence and triune in persons.

Divine indwelling in our souls has two principal purposes:

1. The Holy Trinity dwells in our souls to make us participants of its divine intimate life and to transform us in God.

The intimate life of God consists, as we have already said, in the procession of the Divine Persons—the Word from the Father by way of intellectual generation; and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son by way of affective procession—and in the infinite pleasure the Divine Persons experience between Themselves, in Themselves.

Now, incredible as this affirmation may seem, the trinitarian dwelling in our souls has, as supreme goal, to make us participants in the mystery of the divine intimate life, *associating us to* and transforming

13. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 23, a. 1.

us in God in the measure possible to mere creatures. Let us listen to St. John of the Cross, Doctor of the universal Church, as he explains this incredible marvel:

“The *breathing of the air.*” This is a certain faculty which God will there bestow upon the soul in communication of the Holy Ghost, Who, like one *breathing*, elevates the soul by His Divine aspiration, informs it, strengthens it, so that it too may *breathe in God with the same aspiration of love which the Father breathes with the Son, and the Son with the Father, which is the Holy Ghost Himself*: Who is breathed into the soul in the Father and the Son in that transformation so as to unite it to Himself; for the transformation will not be true and perfect *if the soul is not transformed in the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity in a clear and manifest degree. This breathing of the Holy Ghost in the soul, whereby God transforms it in Himself, is to the soul a joy so deep, so exquisite, and so sublime, that no mortal tongue can describe it, no human understanding, as such, conceives it in any degree. . . .*

Nor is it to be thought impossible that the soul should be capable of so great a thing, that it should breathe in God as God in it, in the way of participation. For granting that God has bestowed upon it so great a favour as to unite it to the Holy Trinity, *whereby it becomes like unto God, and God by participation*, it is altogether incredible that it should exercise the faculties of the intellect, perform its acts of knowledge and of love, or to speak more accurately, should have it all *done in the Holy Trinity together with It, as the Holy Trinity Itself?* This however takes place *by communication and participation, God Himself effecting it in the soul*, for this is to be transformed in the Three Persons in power, wisdom, and love, and herein it is that the soul becomes like unto God, Who, that it might come to this, created it in His own image and likeness.

O souls created for this, *and called thereto*, what are you doing? What are your occupations? Your aim is meanness, and your enjoyments misery. Oh, wretched blindness of the children of Adam, blind to so great a light, and deaf to so clear a voice; you see not that, while seeking after greatness and glory, you are miserable and contemptible, ignorant, and unworthy of blessings so great.¹⁴

Thus, St. John of the Cross. Undeniably the closing apostrophe of the sublime mystic from Fontiveros in Old Castile is fully justified. Facing the sovereign perspective of total transformation in God, the Christian should radically despise all earthly miseries and dedicate himself with unlimited ardor to intensifying more and more his trinitarian life so as to gradually soar to the loftiest altitudes of the mystical union with God.

14. *Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 39, nn. 3, 4 and 7.

It should not be thought, however, that this total transformation in God, considered by the experimental mystics as the supreme crowning of the trinitarian indwelling, has a pantheistic sense of absorption of one's own personality in the torrent of Divine life. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The pantheistic union is not actually a union but an absolute denial of union, since one of the two ends (the creature) disappears when it is absorbed by God. The mystical union is not that. The soul transformed in God never loses its own created personality. St. Thomas gives the extraordinarily expressive example of the candescent iron, which, retaining its nature of iron, acquires the properties of fire and becomes fire by participation.¹⁵

Commenting on the Divine transformation and using this image of the candescent iron, Father Ramière fittingly writes:

It is true that the incandescent iron has the likeness of fire, yet it is a likeness that not even the most skilled artist could impart with the most vivid colors. It can only result from the presence and action of the fire itself. The presence of the fire and the combustion of the iron are two distinct things. The latter is a state of the iron, and the former a relation of the same with a foreign substance. But both things, however distinct, are inseparable: The fire cannot be united to the iron without causing it to undergo combustion and the combustion of the iron cannot result except from its union with the fire.

Thus, the just soul possesses in itself a sanctity distinct from the Holy Ghost but inseparable from His presence in the soul and, consequently, infinitely superior to the highest sanctity attainable by a soul in which the Holy Ghost does not dwell. The latter soul could only be divinized *morally*, by the similarity of its dispositions to those of God. The Christian, on the contrary, is divinized *physically* and in a certain sense *substantially* because, without becoming a single substance and person with God, he possesses in himself the substance of God and receives the communication of His life.¹⁶

2. The Holy Trinity dwells in our souls to give us the full possession of God and to make the Divine Persons the object of our fruition.

We will examine separately the two elements of this conclusion.

a) *To give us the full possession of God.* When treating of the Divine presence of immensity, we noted that, by virtue of the same, God is

15. Cf. *Summa*, I-II, q. 112, a. 1; I, q. 8, a. 1; I, q. 44, a. 1, etc.

16. Henri Ramière, S.J., *El Corazón de Jesús y la divinización del cristiano* (Bilbao: 1963), pp. 229-30.

intimately present in everything—even in the demons of hell—by essence, presence and power. However, a being whose only contact with God is that provided by this presence of immensity, properly speaking does not *possess* God, because this infinite treasure does not belong to him in any way. Let us return to Father Ramière:

Let us imagine a destitute man close to an immense treasure. His being near the treasure does not make him rich: It is the *possession* and not the proximity of the gold that will make him so. Such is the difference between the just soul and the soul of the sinner. The sinner and even the condemned have at their side and *in themselves* the infinite good, yet remain destitute because this treasure does not belong to them; the Christian in the state of grace has in him the Holy Ghost and with Him the plenitude of the heavenly graces *as a treasure that belongs to him in property* and that he can use when and as he pleases.

How great is the happiness of a Christian! Well understood, what a truth to broaden our hearts! What an influence on our whole lives if kept constantly before our eyes! Convinced that the ciborium holds the Real Presence of the body of Jesus Christ, we shudder at the thought that anyone would profane this metal vessel. How horrified we would also be at the least profanation of our bodies if we did not lose sight of this dogma of faith (which is as certain as the first), namely, *the real presence of the spirit of Jesus Christ in us!* Is perchance the Divine Spirit less holy than the sacred flesh of the God-Man? Or do we think He gives more importance to the sacredness of those gold vessels and material temples than He does to that of His living temples and spiritual tabernacles?¹⁷

Nothing, indeed, should fill the Christian with greater horror than the possibility of losing this Divine treasure by mortal sin. The worst calamities and misfortunes we can imagine in the purely human and temporal level—sickness, slander, loss of all material goods, death of dear ones, and so on—are playthings and matter of laughter compared to the terrible catastrophe that a single mortal sin represents for the soul. Here the loss is absolute and strictly *infinite*.

b) *To make the Divine Persons the object of our fruition.* However astonishing to read, this is one of the most intimate purposes of the Divine dwelling in our souls.

The prince of Catholic theology, St. Thomas Aquinas, wrote these amazing words in his *Summa Theologica*:

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 216-17.

Again, we are said to possess only what we can freely use or enjoy: and *to have the power of enjoying the Divine Person* can only be according to sanctifying grace (*potestatem fruendi divina persona*).

By the gift of sanctifying grace the rational creature is perfected so that it can freely use not only the created gift itself, but *enjoy also the Divine Person Himself*" (*ut ipsa persona divina fruatur*).¹⁸

The experimental mystics have verified in practice the profound reality of these words. St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity and many others recount ineffable trinitarian experiences. Sometimes their descriptions baffle speculative theologians, who are perhaps too given to measuring the greatness of God with the limitations of poor human reason even when illuminated by faith.¹⁹

Let us consider some explicit testimonies of experimental mystics:

St. Teresa:

Our good God now desires to remove the scales from the eyes of the soul, so that it may see and understand something of the favour which He is granting it, although He is doing this in a strange manner. It is brought into this Mansion by means of an intellectual vision, in which, by a representation of the truth in a particular way, the Most Holy Trinity reveals Itself, in all three Persons. First of all the spirit becomes enkindled and is illumined, as it were, by a cloud of the greatest brightness. It sees these three Persons, individually, and yet, by a wonderful kind of knowledge which is given to it, the soul realizes that most certainly and truly all these three Persons are one Substance and one Power and one Knowledge and one God alone; so that what we hold by faith the soul may be said here to grasp by sight, although nothing is seen by the eyes, either of the body or of the soul, for it is no imaginary vision. Here all three Persons communicate Themselves to the soul and speak to the soul and explain to it those words which the Gospel attributes to the Lord—namely, that He and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul which loves Him and keeps His commandments.

Oh, God help me! What a difference there is between hearing and believing these words and being led in this way to realize how true they are! Each day

18. I, q. 43, a. 3, ad 1.

19. In reality, the discrepancies between theologians and mystics are more apparent than real. The mystical experience, because of its very ineffability, is not aptly expressed with poor human concepts. Hence, mystics are obliged to use an inadequate language, which in the light of simple natural reason seems inexact and excessive, when in fact it falls very short of the ineffable experience that it endeavors to express. See for example the passage of St. John of the Cross which we are going to quote immediately in the text.

this soul wonders more, for she feels that they have never left her, and perceives quite clearly, in the way I have described, that They are in the interior of her heart—in the most interior place of all and in its greatest depths. So although, not being a learned person, she cannot say how this is, she feels within herself this Divine companionship.²⁰

St. John of the Cross:

We already quoted in the preceding conclusion an extraordinarily expressive text of his. Let us now hear him pondering the soul's ineffable delight in its sublime trinitarian experience.

The sweetness of delight which this touch occasions baffles all description. Neither will I speak of it, lest men should suppose that it is nothing beyond what my words imply, for there are no terms by which we can designate or explain the deep things of God transacted in perfect souls. The language that befits these things is this: Let him who has been favoured with them judge of them by himself, feel them and enjoy them, and be silent about them. . . . Thus it may be truly said, '*savouring of everlasting life.*' *For though the fruition of it is not perfect in this life as it will be in glory; nevertheless, the touch, being of God, savoureth of everlasting life.*²¹

Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity:

I think that to be a domestic of God is to abide in the bosom of the tranquil Trinity, in the innermost depths of myself, in the invincible fortress of holy recollection described by St. John of the Cross.

David sang: "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. 83:3). Such, I think, should be the feeling of every soul when it enters the inner "courts" to contemplate its God and keep in closest contact with Him. It faints in a divine swoon before this all-powerful love, this infinite Majesty which dwells within it. It is not that life forsakes it, but the soul itself disdains this natural life and withdraws from it. Feeling such life to be unworthy of a spirit raised to such dignity, it dies to this life and flows into its God.²²

This is, in its sublime greatness, one of the most intimate purposes of the dwelling of the Holy Trinity in our souls: to give us an ineffable

20. *Interior Castle*, Seventh Mansions, chap. 1, nn. 6 and 7. E. Allison Peers transl. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1946), pp. 331-332.

21. *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza 2, n. 21. David Lewis transl. (London: Longman, 1864), pp. 243-244.

22. "Last Retreat of '*Laudem Gloriam*,'" sixteenth day, in M. M. Philipon, *The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity*, app. 3 (Westminster, Md., Newman, 1947), p. 255.

experience of the great trinitarian mystery as a foretaste or anticipation of eternal beatitude. The Divine Persons give themselves to the soul to be enjoyed, according to the amazing terminology of the Angelic Doctor, fully verified in practice by the experimental mystics. And though this ineffable experience undoubtedly constitutes the highest and most sublime degree of the mystical union with God, it does not represent a favor of an extraordinary kind like the graces *gratis data*. On the contrary, it enters into the normal development of sanctifying grace, and *all Christians are called to these heights* and would indeed attain them if they were perfectly faithful to grace and did not paralyze the progressive sanctifying action of the Holy Ghost with their constant resistance. Let us hear St. Teresa clearly proclaiming this doctrine:

Remember, *the Lord invites us all*; and, since He is Truth Itself, we cannot doubt Him. *If His invitation were not a general one*, He would not have said: "I will give you to drink" (John 7:73). He might have said: "Come, all of you, for after all you will lose nothing by coming; and I will give drink to those whom I think fit for it." But, as He said *we were all to come*, without making this condition, I feel sure that *none will fail to receive this living water unless they cannot keep to the path*.²³

Consequently, it is worthwhile to do everything in our power to *dispose ourselves*, with the grace of God, to enjoy even in this world the ineffable trinitarian experience. The most important means of disposing ourselves are: *lively faith, ardent charity, deep recollection and fervent acts of adoration* of the Divine Persons dwelling in our souls.

The Indwelling and the Sacraments

As we have just seen, every soul in the state of grace is a temple of the Holy Trinity and a tabernacle of the Holy Ghost, as stated in Divine revelation (John 14:23; I Cor. 3:16). But this indwelling of the Divine Persons is perfected and more deeply rooted when the degree of sanctifying grace increases in the soul, whatever the cause of this increase.²⁴

23. *Way of Perfection*, chap. 19, n. 15, Peers transl. (New York, Sheed & Ward, 1946), p. 85; cf. St. John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza 2, n. 27.

24. There are three such causes: the sacraments, which increase grace by their own intrinsic power (*ex opere operato*); the practice of the *infused virtues*, which constitute the *supernatural merit* (*ex opere operantis*); and prayer, which can increase grace by its *impetratory*

Among the determinants of this increase are, in the first place, the *Sacraments*, instituted by Jesus Christ precisely to give or to increase sanctifying grace in us.²⁵ *Penance*, when properly received by the sinner who has lost grace by mortal sin, and *Baptism* produce the Divine indwelling as they infuse sanctifying grace, from which they are inseparable, into the soul. The other sacraments—and *Penance* itself when received by a person already in the grace of God—produce an increase of grace and a greater embedment or inhesion of the Divine Persons in the soul.

It is the case to emphasize the action of the Eucharist and of confirmation in the increase of grace and the perfecting of the trinitarian dwelling in the soul. Briefly, it is this:

THE EUCHARIST

The greatest and most excellent of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ is the most holy Eucharist. In it we receive not only grace but also the very Author of grace, Christ Himself. We receive the water together with the fountain or spring whence it gushes.

But what most Christians ignore is that, together with the Word Incarnate, there is given to us in the Eucharist the Father and the Holy Ghost, because the three Divine Persons are absolutely inseparable. Where one is the other two necessarily are by virtue of the ineffable mystery that theology terms divine *circuminsession*. This mystery appears expressly in Sacred Scripture and has been defined by the official magisterium of the Church. Behold the proofs:

a) *Sacred Scripture*. Christ Himself says: “I and the Father are one. . . . The Father is in me, and I in the Father” (John 10:30 and 38). “He that seeth me, seeth the Father also. . . . The Father, who abideth in me, he doth the works. Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” (John 14:9-11) Naturally, the same is to be said of the Holy Ghost.

b) *The Magisterium of the Church*. Chosen from among many other texts, these are the explicit words of the Council of Florence:

force (as gratuitous alms), independent of merit. All this is amply explained in our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 77 ff., to which we refer the reader desirous of more information.

25. Cf. Denz. 844, 849, 850 and 851.

Because of this unity, the Father is entirely in the Son and entirely in the Holy Ghost; the Son is entirely in the Father and entirely in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost is entirely in the Father and entirely in the Son. None of the persons precedes any of the others in eternity, nor does any have greater immensity or greater power (Denz. 704).

As we have said, in theology this mystery is termed *circuminsession*, which is approximately equivalent to the mutual and *reciprocal inhesion* of the Divine Persons. By virtue of it, where one Divine Person is, necessarily the other two are also. Consequently, in the Eucharist, together with the humanity and divinity of Christ (the Son of God), are the Father and the Holy Ghost, though by distinct reasons: the Divine Word makes Himself present in the Eucharist by virtue of His *hypostatic union* with the body and blood of Christ, while the Father and the Holy Ghost are present by virtue of the intratrinitarian *circuminsession*.

Hence, each well-received Eucharistic communion results in a more penetrating *dwelling* or *inhesion* of the Divine Persons in the souls of the just.²⁶ The Eucharist is a real treasure for the soul that receives It worthily.

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation can be defined as *a sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ in which, by the imposition of hands and the anointing with the chrism under the prescribed form, the plenitude of the Holy Ghost is given to the baptized person, together with the sacramental grace and character, to strengthen him in the Faith and so that he confess it courageously as a good soldier of Christ.*

In this wide definition are present all the essential elements that impart to us the intimate nature of this great sacrament, which is called with good reason the sacrament of the plenitude of the Holy Ghost.

This is the sacramental form pronounced by the minister: "I sign thee with the Sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

The *Roman Catechism*, or *Cathechism of the Council of Trent*, shows the effects of this sacrament in the following manner:

26. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, I, q. 43, a. 6, ad 4.

It is peculiar to Confirmation first to perfect the grace of Baptism. For those who have been made Christians by Baptism, still have in some sort the tenderness and softness, as it were, of new-born infants, and afterwards become, by means of the Sacrament of chrism, stronger to resist all the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil, while their minds are fully confirmed in faith to confess and glorify the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, also, originated the very name (*Confirmation*).²⁷

The sacrament of Confirmation is equivalent to a true Pentecost for each one of those baptized in Christ. Like the apostles, whose weakness and cowardice in the hours of the passion of Christ were converted into superhuman energy and fortitude when the fire of Pentecost descended over them, the Christian who receives the sacrament of Confirmation feels his spiritual forces strengthened, especially in regard to the proclamation and public defense of the faith received in Baptism.

Fr. Philipon writes:

The sacrament of confirmation perpetuates in the Church all of the benefits of Pentecost. The effects of baptism are marvelously surpassed. The Holy Ghost, already in possession of the Christian soul, fills it to overflowing this time with His superabundant graces, with the plenitude of His gifts. With good reason, the moral triumph of the virgins and martyrs is attributed to Him. It is the Spirit of God, Who forms the souls of the saints. Those secret warnings, those incessant invitations, those continuous motions of the Holy Ghost, without which no one can neither enlist nor stay in the way of salvation and even less advance in the way of perfection. On the contrary, by the activity and the functioning of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the just man, who already lives the life of grace since baptism, is elevated to perfection. Thanks to them, the soul, docile to the least divine inspiration, advances rapidly in the life of faith, hope and charity and in the practice of all the virtues. His spiritual life finds its full expansion and development. Those gifts of the Holy Ghost work in it with such an efficacy that they conduct it to the highest peaks of holiness.²⁸

The sacrament of confirmation imprints an indelible character or mark on the soul of those who receive it validly (even if one receives it in state of mortal sin, since the *character* is separable from grace), by virtue of which the Christian becomes a *soldier of Christ* and acquires the power of confessing officially—*ex officio*—the faith of Christ and of receiving the sacred things

27. *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (New York: Joseph Wagner, 1934), p. 209.

28. *The Sacraments in the Christian Life*, chap. 2.

in a more perfect way, together with the right to the actual graces that he will need during his whole life for this confession and defense of the faith. Thus, it is of an inestimable price and worth. However, precisely because of its lofty greatness, the sacrament of Confirmation carries with it great demands and responsibilities. Some of the most important are:

a) It imposes the obligation of acquiring a good religious culture, as an indispensable condition for the defense of the faith against all its enemies.

b) It imposes the obligation to despise so-called *human respect*, which is incompatible with the ardor and courage with which the soldier of Christ is to publicly proclaim his faith.

c) It prompts the recipient to the apostolate in all its forms, principally in his own surroundings and special circumstances of life.

d) It obliges the recipient to be constantly attentive to the internal inspirations of the Holy Ghost and to be exquisitely faithful to grace. To whom much has been given, much will be demanded.

The Holy Ghost's Action in the Soul

IN the preceding chapter we saw in what manner the Holy Ghost, in union with the Father and the Son, is the sweet guest of our souls—*dulcis hospes animae*¹—where He dwells as in a true living temple.

However, it is altogether clear and evident that the Holy Ghost does not dwell in our souls in a passive and inoperative manner, but displays in them a very lively activity aimed at improving them by degrees and conducting them (if they do not place obstacles in the way of His divine action) to the highest peaks of union with God, in which sanctity consists.

As we indicated in the preceding chapter, the *infused virtues* and the *gifts of the Holy Ghost* are instilled in the soul together with sanctifying grace. Constituting the dynamic or operative element of our supernatural organism, both are *supernatural habits* that the Holy Ghost infuses in our souls to enable us to produce supernatural acts proper to our condition as children of God. Without them we could not accomplish those supernatural acts² even if possessing sanctifying grace, because this grace, as we saw, is a supernatural *entitative* habit, not operative or ordained to action, but residing in the very essence of our souls to divinize them. To perform *supernatural* acts in a manner *connatural* to our divine filiation, we need corresponding supernatural *operative* habits that would inform the potencies of our souls, elevating them to the supernatural level and making them capable of producing those supernatural acts. These supernatural operative habits are the *infused virtues* and the *Gifts of the Holy Ghost*.

1. Sequence from the Mass of Pentecost.

2. Unless there is a *violent* impulse of an actual grace, as we will explain immediately.

Both are prompted by the Holy Ghost—though in very distinct ways, as we will see now—in the sublime enterprise of the sanctification of the children of God.

THE INFUSED VIRTUES

We will explain briefly their *nature*, *existence* and fundamental *division* and *how they act* in each case under the motion of the Holy Ghost.

Nature

The infused virtues are *operative habits infused by God in the faculties of the soul to dispose them to function supernaturally according to the dictates of reason enlightened by Faith*.

The existence and necessity of the infused virtues follows from the very nature of sanctifying grace. Grace is a divine seed which by its nature seeks growth and development until it reaches full perfection. But since sanctifying grace itself is not immediately operative (although it is so *radically* as the remote principle of all our supernatural operations), it follows that grace demands and postulates certain *immediate principles of operation* that flow from grace itself and are inseparable from it. If this were not the case, men would be elevated to the supernatural order only as regards their souls but not as regards their operative powers. And although, absolutely speaking, God could elevate our faculties to the supernatural order by means of continual actual graces, this would produce a true *violence* in the human psychological structure by reason of the tremendous disproportion between the purely natural faculty and the supernatural act to be effected. And such violence could not be reconciled with the customary suavity of Divine Providence, which moves all things according to their natures.³ From this we deduce the necessity of certain supernatural operative principles so that man can tend to his supernatural end in a manner that is perfectly *connatural* and without violence.

Existence

The basis of the existence of the infused virtues—above all the theological virtues, which are the most important—is to be found in Sacred Scrip-

3. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, I-II, q. 110, a. 2.

ture⁴ and has been proclaimed again and again by the official Magisterium of the Church.⁵

Division

The infused virtues are divided in two fundamental groups. The first ordains the faculties of the soul as regards the supernatural *end* and is comprised of the three *theological* virtues (faith, hope and charity). The second disposes the faculties in regard to the *means* to attain that end and is comprised of the four *cardinal* virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) with the cortege of all their annexed or derived virtues. St. Thomas studies and discusses more than fifty of these virtues in his marvelous *Summa Theologica*.⁶ With these, all the faculties and energies of man are elevated to the order of grace. In each faculty and in relation to each specifically distinct object, there is a supernatural habit that disposes man to act according to the principle of grace and to develop supernatural life with that operation.

How They Act

This is a most important point for the accurate understanding of the action of the Holy Ghost in our own sanctification.

For an infused virtue to pass to action (in other words, for it to realize the corresponding virtuous action), *a previous motion of an actual grace coming from God is absolutely necessary.*

In effect, it is absolutely impossible for the purely natural effort of the soul to put the infused habits into operation since the natural order cannot determine the operations of the supernatural order. There is an unfathomable abyss between the two. They belong to two entirely distinct levels, the supernatural surpassing and infinitely transcending the natural level. Nor is it possible that the infused habits actuate themselves, because a habit can be actuated only by the power and action of the agent that caused it; and, in regard to the *infused* habits, only God, Who produced them, can set them in motion. The action of God, in this respect, is as necessary as the influence

4. Cf. I Cor. 13:13; 2 Pet. 1:5-7; Rom. 8:5-6, 8:15; I Cor. 2:14; James 1:5, and others.

5. Cf. Denz. 410, 483, 800, 821, and others.

6. We have explained all this at length in our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 31-47, to which we refer the reader for more information.

of a being already *in act* to reduce a potency to act. Absolutely speaking, God could develop and perfect sanctifying grace, which is infused into the essence of our soul, simply and solely through actual graces, without infusing any supernatural operative habits in the faculties.⁷ On the other hand, God could not develop sanctifying grace without using the *actual* graces, although He has given us the infused operative habits, since those habits could not be reduced to act without the previous *divine motion*, which in the supernatural order is nothing other than *actual grace*.

Every act of an infused virtue and every operation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost presupposes a previous actual grace that has set that virtue or gift in motion.⁸ The actual grace is nothing other than the divine influence that has moved the infused habit to its operation.

Now, how does the Holy Ghost move the habit of an infused virtue? With what kind of motion? Is it the same motion with which He moves the habit of the gifts, or is it a completely distinct motion?

For the moment, we will merely state beforehand that the motion of the Holy Ghost regarding the infused virtues is *completely distinct* from the one which moves the habit of His gifts. The Holy Ghost moves the infused virtues with the impulse of an actual grace in the *human mode* (though obviously of strictly supernatural order, because it is a question of moving a supernatural habit also), while He moves His own gifts with an actual grace in the *divine or superhuman mode*. Naturally, the result is that the actions proceeding from the gifts of the Holy Ghost are incomparably more perfect than those proceeding from the infused virtues. When explaining the nature of the Divine donative motion, we will specify this fundamental difference regarding the motion of the infused virtues in order to show the importance and necessity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost for the full development of Christian life in its ascension to sanctity.

THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST

Given the great importance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in a work entirely dedicated to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, we are going

7. As said earlier, this would be antinatural and violent. We speak now only of the absolute potency of God, not of what He has in fact realized in our souls.

8. Though, of course, not every actual grace infallibly produces an act of virtue. (e.g.,

to study them to the fullest extent permitted by the framework of this book.⁹

In this section we will limit ourselves to the study of the gifts *in general*, leaving the study of each gift in particular to the following chapters.

The Gifts of God

The first great gift of God is the Holy Ghost Himself, Who is the very love by which God loves Himself and loves us. It is said of the Holy Ghost in the liturgy of the Church that He is the gift of the Most High God: *altissimi donum Dei*.¹⁰ The Holy Ghost is, therefore, the first gift of God, not only as substantial love in the intimate life of the Trinity, but as He dwells in us through the Divine *mission* or sending.

From this first gift proceed all the other gifts of God. In the last analysis, whatever God gives to His creatures, both in the supernatural and in the natural order, is nothing more than a completely gratuitous effect of His liberal and infinite love. In a wide sense, whatever we have received from God is a "gift of the Holy Ghost." However, in a proper and strict sense, this expression designates certain supernatural habits infused by God into souls together with sanctifying grace and the infused virtues for their full sanctification. We use it here in this strict sense.

Existence

The remote basis for the existence of gifts of the Holy Ghost is found in Sacred Scripture. The text of Isaias is classic:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of this root. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord (11:1-3).

a *sufficient* grace rejected by a sinner who feels in his interior a divine inspiration, a remorse, or the like, but ignores it.)

9. The reader who desires more information can consult, among others, the magnificent work of Fr. Ignacio G. Menéndez-Reigada, O.P., *Los dones del Espíritu Santo y la perfección cristiana* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científica, 1948).

10. Hymn *Veni, Creator* of the liturgy of Pentecost.

or *habitual* manner. The same faith teaches us the permanent presence of the Holy Ghost in every soul in the state of grace (I Cor. 6:19), and the Holy Ghost is never present without His gifts.

b) *Infused by God*: If we bear in mind that they are *supernatural* realities, it is clear and evident that the soul could never acquire them on its own, because they infinitely transcend all the purely natural order.

c) *Into the faculties of the soul*: The gifts reside in the faculties, as do the infused virtues, whose supernatural action they come to perfect, giving them the divine or superhuman modality proper to them, as we shall see.

d) *To receive and second easily*: This is proper and characteristic of the *habits*, which perfect the faculties precisely to receive and second easily the motion of the agent that would move them.

e) *The motions of the same Holy Ghost*, Who moves and actuates them directly and immediately as *motor and principal cause*. They are different from the infused virtues, which are moved or actuated by man himself as motor and principal cause, though always under the previous motion of an actual grace.

f) *In a divine or superhuman mode*: This is the main difference between the ordinary motion of actual grace—moving the infused virtues in *the human way*—and the divine motion, which actuates the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the *divine and superhuman way*. We will explain this very interesting point separately.

The Divine Motion of the Gifts

The divine motion of the gifts is very distinct from the divine activity found in the infused virtues. In the divine motion of the infused virtues, God acts as *first mover*, but the full responsibility of the action is man's as *immediate cause* entirely subordinate to the first. For that reason, the acts of the virtues are entirely our own because they come from ourselves, from our reason and free will. True, they are always under the motion of God as First Mover, without which no act of any kind can proceed from a potency either in the natural or supernatural orders.

However, in the case of the gifts, the divine motion is utterly different. God acts, not as *first mover*—as in the case of the virtues—but as *unique mover* and man ceases to be *immediate cause*, becoming simple *instrumental cause*

of the effect the Holy Ghost produces in the soul as *unique* mover. Therefore, the acts which proceed from the gifts are materially human but formally *divine* in the way that the melody an artist plays on his harp is materially from the harp but formally from the musician who plays it. This does not diminish in any way the merit of the soul that produces *instrumentally* that divine act, seconding the divine motion by its docility; for, in spite of the fact that the Holy Ghost is the unique mover, the soul acts as a *live and conscious* instrument that adheres with all the strength of its free will to the divine motion, letting it conduct it and seconding it fully.¹⁴ The passivity of the soul under the divine motion of the gifts is a relative passivity—that is, with respect to the *initiative* of the act, which belongs exclusively to the Holy Ghost. But once the divine motion is initiated, the soul reacts actively and associates itself intensely with the act with all the vital power of which it is capable and with all its free will. Thus, the divine initiative, the relative passivity of the soul, the vital reaction of the soul, the exercise of the free will and the supernatural merit of the action are blended and mutually complement each other.

This is why the soul is fully *active* in the exercise of the infused virtues; its acts are produced in the *human manner* or mode and the soul is fully conscious that it works when and as it pleases (for example, performing an act of humility, prayer, obedience, or the like, when and as it wants). The soul is the *motor* cause of its own acts, though always, of course, under the general divine motion of actual grace that never fails and is always at our disposal—like air for breathing—when we want to work virtuously.

The exercise of the gifts—as we have said—is entirely different. The Holy Ghost is the *unique motor cause* that moves the habit of the gifts, and its soul passes to the category of a simple *instrument*, though conscious and free.

14. St. Thomas says that expressly when he answers an objection about the necessity of the gifts as *habits*. *Objection*: "Further, the gifts of the Holy Ghost perfect man according as he is moved by the Spirit of God. . . . But in so far as man is moved by the Spirit of God, he is somewhat like an *instrument* in his regard. Now to be perfected by a habit is befitting, not an instrument, but a principal agent. Therefore the gifts of the Holy Ghost are not habits." *Answer*: "This argument holds, in the case of an instrument which has no faculty of action, but only of being acted upon. But man is not an instrument of that kind; for he is so acted upon by the Holy Ghost, that *he also acts himself*, in so far as he has a *free-will*. Therefore he needs a habit" (*Summa*, I-II, q. 68, a. 3, ad 2).

St. Thomas repeats this doctrine in many other places, as, for example, regarding the humanity of Christ, *instrument of the Divine Word*, which was moved, however, by Its own will, seconding the action of the Word (*ibid.*, III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 2).

The soul reacts vitally on receiving the motion of the gifts, and in this way freedom and merit are preserved under the operation of the gifts, but the soul merely *seconds* the divine motion, whose initiative and responsibility belong entirely to the Holy Ghost, Who is acting as the *unique motor cause*. As such, the action of the gifts will be more perfect and pure as the soul succeeds in seconding the divine motion with greater docility without trying to divert it by movements of human initiative, which would do nothing but impede or obstruct the sanctifying action of the Holy Ghost.

It follows from this that the soul, when it senses the action of the Holy Ghost, should repress its own initiative and reduce its activity to seconding the divine motion, remaining *passive* to it. It should be well understood that it is passive only in relation to the divine agent. In reality, it becomes a very lively activity on the part of the soul, though only and exclusively to second the divine action, without altering or modifying it by human activities. In this sense, it can and should be said that the soul also *works* what is worked in it, *produces* what is produced in it, *executes* what the Holy Ghost executes in it. It is simply a question of *activity received*,¹⁵ of an absorption of the natural activity by a supernatural activity, of a sublimation of the faculties to a *divine* order of operation. And this has absolutely nothing to do with the sterile inactivity of Quietism.

Necessity of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are absolutely necessary for the perfection of the infused virtues—in other words, for the attainment of Christian perfection—and even for eternal salvation itself. Let us see these points separately.

1) *The gifts of the Holy Ghost are necessary for the perfection of the infused virtues.* The fundamental reason is the great disproportion between the infused virtues and the subject wherein they reside: the human soul.

As is known, the infused virtues are *supernatural habits* and the subject in which they are received is the human soul, or, more exactly, its powers or faculties.

15. "In the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the position of the human mind is of one *moved* rather than of a mover" (ibid., II-II, q. 52, a. 2, ad 1).

Now, according to the axiom of the theological schools, "what is received is received in the mode of the recipient." The infused virtues, on being received in the faculties of the soul, are degraded, so to speak, and acquire our *human mode* of operation, because of their inevitable accommodation to the psychological operation of man. They are as if smothered in this human atmosphere. This is why the *infused* virtues, in spite of being much more perfect in themselves than the corresponding *acquired* virtues (which are acquired by the repetition of *naturally virtuous* acts), do not give us the facility in operation which we obtain from the acquired virtues—precisely because of the imperfection with which we possess the infused habits (which are *supernatural*). This is seen very clearly in the sinner who repents and confesses after a life of sin. He could easily return to his sins in spite of having received all the infused virtues with grace. This does not happen with the person who, through repetition of virtuous acts, has acquired some natural or *acquired* virtue.

Now it is evident that if we possess imperfectly in the soul the *habit* of the infused virtues, the *acts* that proceed from the habit will also be imperfect unless some superior agent intervenes to perfect them. This is precisely the purpose of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Moved and regulated, not by human reason like the virtues, but by the Holy Ghost Himself, they bestow on the infused virtues, and especially the theological virtues, that *divine atmosphere* they need in order to develop all their supernatural virtuality.¹⁶

Hence, the imperfection of the infused virtues is not in themselves—they are most perfect—but in the *imperfect mode* with which we possess them. We possess them imperfectly by reason of the *human modality* that inevitably attaches to them because of their accommodation to the natural psychological functions under the control of simple reason enlightened by faith. From this flows the necessity for the gifts of the Holy Ghost to come to the aid of the infused virtues, disposing the faculties of the soul to be moved by a superior agent—the Holy Ghost Himself—Who will actuate them in a *divine mode*, in a mode completely proportioned to the most perfect object of the infused virtues. Under

16. Cf. *Summa*, I-II, q. 68, a. 2. This is the reason for the absolute uselessness of the operation of the gifts in the *human mode*, were it possible. It would contribute nothing to the perfection of the virtues. The same imperfection of the *human mode* would continue.

the influence of the gifts, the infused virtues will be, so to speak, *in their proper milieu*.¹⁷

Consequently, without the frequent and dominant action of the gifts of the Holy Ghost moving the infused virtues in the *divine mode*, the infused virtues will never reach their full expansion and development no matter how much they multiply and intensify their acts in the human mode. Without the predominant regime of the gifts of the Holy Ghost it is impossible to attain Christian perfection.¹⁸

2) *The gifts of the Holy Ghost are necessary, in a certain sense, even for salvation.* To remove all doubts, it is enough to be mindful of the corruption of human nature as a consequence of original sin, with which all of us come into the world. The infused virtues do not reside in a sound nature but in a nature *inclined to evil* by sin, and although the virtues have sufficient power to conquer all temptations opposed to them, *in practice* they cannot overcome some of them without the help of the gifts, especially those *violent* temptations that arise suddenly and unexpectedly. In those circumstances in which resistance or a fall are a decision of the moment, a man cannot depend on the slow deliberation and discursus of reason but must act quickly, as if by a supernatural *instinct*, that is, under the influence and movement of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Without this movement of the gifts, a fall is almost certain, granted the vicious inclination of human nature wounded by original sin. It is true that these situations are not usually frequent in the life of a man, but the fact that they are possible is sufficient to conclude that, at least in them, the action of the gifts is necessary for eternal salvation itself.

The Godlike Mode of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost

As we explained earlier, the most important and fundamental characteristic of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is their action in the divine or superhuman mode; that is, the *divine modality* they imprint on the acts of the infused virtues when they are perfected by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Because of the exceptional importance of this doctrine in the theology of the gifts,

17. Cf. *ibid.*

18. This matter is exhaustively treated in the theological study by Fr. Ignacio G. Menéndez-Reigada, *Necesidad de los dones del Espíritu Santo* (Salamanca: 1940).

we offer the reader some words of Father Philipon admirably explaining these ideas. "The most fundamental property of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is their *godlike mode*: Their acts come from us, but under divine inspiration. God is their *rule* and their *measure*, their *special motor*."¹⁹

In effect, human acts can have a threefold measure:

1. A *human* measure, which imprints the regulation of the reason on all of our moral life. This is the case of the *natural or acquired* virtues.

2. A *human-divine* measure in the order of sanctifying grace, which comes to superelevate in its essence all our virtuous activity to make it participate in the life of thought, love and action of the triune God by means of the Christian (*infused*) virtues but still leaving man his *con-natural mode of working* (that is, the *human mode*), according to the deliberations of his discursive reason and the reasoned inclinations of his will. It is the common regime of the theological and (infused) moral virtues when man, divinized by the grace of adoption, realizes elicited acts that, in substance, belong to the supernatural order but whose mode of realization continues to be *human*.

3. There is, finally, a superior regime of virtuous life, *godlike* not only in its substance but also in *its mode*, in that the acts have the divine measure of the Spirit of God, Who is their *motor* and their specifying *rule*. This is the case of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. God is not merely the efficient cause of these acts; He takes the initiative in the same, He inspires them, He realizes them in *His divine measure* in which men, converted into sons of God by grace and directed by His Spirit, participate in different degrees. This *godlike* operating is enveloped by the way of thinking, loving, wanting and working of the Spirit of God in the proportion that is possible to man without his leaving the conditions of incarnate spirit. . . . The person animated by the breath of the Spirit, is as if taken and sustained by the swift wings of a mighty eagle. . . .

The spiritual life of man becomes like a projection within himself of the customs of the Trinity, in whose bosom he enters in imitation of the only Son of the Father, becoming but one with Him mystically, in the unity of a single person. The Christian transforms himself into "another Christ" who walks the earth and is identified with all the

19. M. M. Philipon, O.P., *Los dones del Espíritu Santo* (Barcelona: 1966), pp. 149-51.

sentiments of the Word Incarnate, glorifier of the Father and savior of men. The Christian thus advances through life illuminated in his intelligence by the brightness of the Word, his life of love in the rhythm of the Holy Ghost, conforming all his interior and exterior conduct to the model of the activity “*ad extra*” of the three Divine Persons in the indivisible unity of Their essence. The Spirit of God becomes not only *inspirer* and *motor* but also *rule, form and life* of this activity carried out in the Godlike and Christlike way proper to the Christian ever more robed, by faith, love and practice, in all the virtues of the sanctity of Christ.

The different treatises on the gifts of the Holy Ghost cannot sufficiently emphasize that, in the concrete order of the economy of salvation, the activity of the gifts takes place in us not only in a *Godlike* but also a *Christlike* way that configures us with the only son of the Father. To believe is to see everything with the gaze of Christ. We hope for everything from the omnipotent and merciful Trinity, but by virtue of the merits of Christ. Our life of love of God—our Father—and of men—our brothers—expands into a friendship with all in the person of Christ. The same happens with all the other virtues and all the other gifts of the Holy Ghost. Our whole spiritual life develops in us, according to the expression of St. Paul, “in Christ Jesus.”

The trinitarian exemplar is the supreme rule of the Godlike activity of the gifts. Animated by the Holy Ghost in each of his acts, the *Christian should pass through life like an incarnate God*.

THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST

When the soul corresponds with docility to the interior movement of the Holy Ghost, it produces *acts* of exquisite virtue that can be compared to the fruit of a tree. Not all the acts that proceed from grace have the characteristic of *fruits*, but only those which are more mature and exquisite and possess a certain suavity or sweetness. They are simply acts which proceed from the gifts of the Holy Ghost.²⁰

20. Yet they are not exclusively from the gifts, since they also may proceed from the virtues. According to St. Thomas, those virtuous acts in which the soul finds spiritual consolation are fruits of the Holy Ghost (cf. *Summa*, I-II, q. 70, a. 2).

They are distinguished from the gifts as the fruit is distinguished from the branch and the effect from the cause. They are also distinguished from the beatitudes—of which we will speak immediately—in the degree of perfection, the beatitudes being more perfect and more finished than the fruits. Therefore, all the beatitudes are fruits, but all the fruits are not beatitudes.²¹ The fruits are completely contrary to the works of the flesh, since the flesh tends to sensible goods, which are beneath man, while the Holy Ghost moves us to those things which are above.²²

As regards the number of the fruits, the Vulgate enumerates twelve: charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continence and chastity (Gal. 5:22-23). But in the Pauline text, only nine are mentioned: charity, joy, peace, longanimity, affability, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. St. Thomas says, in full agreement with St. Augustine, that the Apostle had no intention of enumerating all the fruits but wished only to mention some of them by way of example. In reality, there are or can be many more since they are *acts*, not *habits* like the gifts.

THE BEATITUDES

Still more perfect than the fruits are the beatitudes. They signify the culmination and definitive crowning of the Christian life on earth. Like the fruits, the beatitudes are *acts* and not *habits*.²³ Like the fruits, they flow from the virtues and the gifts, but they are such perfect acts that we must attribute them more to the gifts than to the virtues.²⁴ In spite of the rewards that accompany them, they are an anticipation of the eternal beatitude.²⁵

In the Sermon on the Mount, Our Lord reduces the beatitudes to eight: poverty of spirit, meekness, tears, hunger and thirst for justice, mercy, purity of heart, peace and persecution for justice' sake (Matt. 5:3-10). We may also observe that the number is a mystical number which indicates something without limits.

21. Cf. *ibid.*

22. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 4.

23. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 69, a. 1.

24. Cf. *ibid.* ad 1; q. 70, a. 2.

25. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 69, a. 2.

The following is a brief summary and schema of the relationship of the virtues, gifts and beatitudes as set down by St. Thomas.²⁶

	<i>Virtues</i>	<i>Gifts</i>	<i>Beatitudes</i>
Theological	Charity	Wisdom	Peacemakers
	Faith	Understanding	The pure of heart
	Hope	Knowledge	Those who weep
		Fear	The poor in spirit
Moral	Prudence	Counsel	The merciful
	Justice	Piety	The meek
	Fortitude	Fortitude	Those who hunger and thirst for justice
	Temperance	Fear	The poor in spirit

The eighth beatitude (persecution for justice' sake) is not listed because, as the most perfect of all, it contains and embraces all the others amidst the greatest difficulties and obstacles.²⁷

- We pass now to the detailed study of each of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in particular.

26. Cf. *ibid.*, qq. 68-69; II-II, qq. 8, 9, 19, 45, 52, 121, 139 and 141, ad 3.

27. Cf. *ibid.*, I-II, q. 69, a. 3, ad 5; a. 4, ad 2.

The Gift of Fear of the Lord

ALL the gifts of the Holy Ghost are most perfect, yet there is undoubtedly a hierarchy between them that determines different degrees of excellence and perfection. This hierarchical scale begins with the gift of *fear* and reaches its apex with the gift of *wisdom*, the most sublime and excellent of all.

Thus, we shall begin our study with the gift of fear.¹

Should God Be Feared?

In his fundamental work, the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, begins the lengthy and magnificent question dedicated to the gift of the fear of God by asking if God is be feared.²

It seems clear that God cannot and should not be feared for two very clear and simple reasons:

- 1) *The object of fear is a future evil.* But God is free of all evil since He is goodness itself. Therefore, He cannot and should not be feared.
- 2) *Fear is opposed to hope.* Now, we hope in God. Therefore, we cannot fear Him at the same time.

Despite these difficulties, it is evident that God can and ought to be feared in an upright way. God, as the supreme good and future beatitude of man, cannot be an object of fear; He is an object of love and desire. But God is also infinitely just, hating and punishing the sins of man. So, in so far as

1. Cf. our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 334-41.

2. Cf. *Summa*, II-II, q. 19, a. 1.

He is able to inflict evil upon us in punishment for our sins, He can and ought to be feared.

The first difficulty is resolved by realizing that the *evil* of fault is not from God as its author, but from us, in so far as we forsake God; while the evil of punishment is from God as its author, in so far as it has the character of a good, since it is something just, through being inflicted on us justly; although originally this is due to the demerit of sin. Thus it is written in the book of Wisdom: "For God made not death; but the wicked with works and words have called it to them" (Wis. 1:13 and 16).

The second difficulty is resolved by realizing that one must consider the justice of God, by which He punishes sinners, as well as His mercy, by which He spares us. Fear is aroused in us by the consideration of His justice, while hope enters by the consideration of His mercy. Thus, under different aspects, God is the object of hope and fear.

It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that there are many types of fear, and not all of them are perfect or even virtuous.

Different Types of Fear

Four types of fear can be distinguished, each very different from the other:

1) *Worldly Fear*. This is the fear that would not hesitate to offend God in order to avoid a temporal evil. Thus one would apostatize from the Faith in order to avoid the torments and sufferings of persecution. Clearly, not only is this fear not virtuous, it is a great sin, since a created good (in this case one's own life) is preferred to the non-created good, which is God Himself. For this reason Christ says in the Gospel: "He that findeth his life, shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for me, shall find it" (Matt. 10:39). The sins committed because of *human respect* stem, to a greater or lesser degree, from this kind of *worldly* fear. How far removed from this worldly fear was St. Teresa of Jesus, who said that she would rather be "completely lacking in gratitude to the whole world" than to offend God in a single point.³

2) *Servile Fear*. This is the fear of the servant who waits on his master out of fear of the punishment he might receive if he does not do so. This type of fear has two modalities:

3. *The Life*, chap. 5, n. 4.

a) If fear of punishment is the *only* cause for avoiding sin, it is a sin, because it does not matter to him that sin is an offense against God; what keeps him from doing evil is simply the fear of punishment. (It is as if one were to say: "I would commit the sin if there were no hell.") This is evil and sinful because even though the person *materially* avoids sin, he commits it *formally* because of the affection he has admitted. In this sense it is called *servilely servile fear, and is always evil and sinful.*

b) *If fear of punishment is not the only or proximate cause but accompanies the first and principal cause (the fear of offending God), it is good and honest, since, in the final analysis, it rejects sin primarily because it offends God and, in addition, because it may result in punishment by God.* Such is the sorrow called *attrition*, which the Church, against the doctrine of the Protestants and Jansenists, states to be good and honest.⁴ It is also called simply *servile fear.*

3) *Imperfect Filial Fear.* This is the fear that avoids sin *because it would separate us from God, Whom we love.* It is the fear of a son who loves his father and does not want to be separated from him. This kind of fear is very good and honest. But it is not yet perfect, since it still takes into account the punishment that would result: the separation from the father and, thus, from heaven. Nevertheless, it is far superior to simply servile fear, because it comes from the love for the father rather than from the fear of other kinds of pains. This is called *initial fear* and occupies an intermediate place between servile and true filial fear, as we shall see.

4) *Perfect Filial Fear.* This is the fear of the loving son awaiting orders from his father, whom he will not disobey merely because he does not want to displease him, even if not threatened by any kind of pain or punishment.

It is the perfect fear of those who can say in all honesty: "Even if there were no heaven, I would love Thee, and even if there were no hell, I would fear Thee."

The question now arises: Which of these fears is the gift of the Holy Ghost? Evidently, neither the *worldly* nor the *servile* fear. It could not be the worldly, because it is sinful: it fears more the loss of the world than the loss of God,

4. Cf. Denz. 818, 898, 915, 1303-5.

Whom it would abandon for the world. Nor could it be the servile, because, although not evil of itself, it could be found even in a sinner by means of an actual grace that would move him to the sorrow of attrition because of the fear of punishment. This fear is a grace from God that moves one to repentance, but as yet it is not connected to charity nor, therefore, to the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, only *perfect filial fear* is the gift of fear, for it is based directly on charity or reverence of God as Father. But as imperfect filial fear (*initial fear*) is not substantially different from perfect filial fear, the imperfect also is a part of the gift of fear, although only in its incipient and imperfect manifestations. In the measure that charity increases, initial fear is gradually purified so that it loses the servile aspect that still fears punishment and gradually considers sin solely as an offense against God.⁵

With these notions, we can now examine the intimate nature of the gift of fear.

Nature of the Gift of Fear

The gift of fear is one of the most difficult to define with all theological exactitude. We could give the following definition regarding its most intimate and positive nature:

The gift of fear is a supernatural habit by which the just soul, under the instinct of the Holy Ghost, acquires a special docility for subjecting itself completely to the Divine will out of reverence for the excellence and majesty of God.

This general notion will suffice for the time being. We will give a more detailed outline of the intimate nature of this admirable gift when we define the main virtues with which it is related and the admirable effects it produces in the soul.

Fear's Deiform Mode

God is the supreme and exemplary cause of all the supernatural gifts we have received from His divine liberality, yet it seems that one cannot find any divine exemplarity for the gift of fear, since the existence of any kind of fear in God is absolutely impossible.

5. Cf. *Summa*, II-II, q. 19, aa. 8-10.

Father Philipon writes:

Divine exemplarity, which is very visible in all the other gifts of the Holy Ghost, is difficult to see in the gift of fear. One can easily understand that the intellectual gifts have as their prototype the intelligence, knowledge, wisdom and counsel of God. The gift of piety is like an imitation of the glorification that God finds in Himself, in His Word. The gift of fortitude is like a reflection of the divine omnipotence and immutability. But, how could we discover in God a model of the gift of fear? It exists, in fact, in His separateness from all evil, that is, in His infinite sanctity, which He communicates to men and angels, who "tremble" before Him; it exists in His divine purity, inaccessible to the least stain and endowed with a power sovereignly efficacious against all forms of evil. The Spirit of God is a spirit of fear, just as it is one of love, intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, counsel, fortitude and piety. In His personal action in the most intimate part of the soul, the Spirit of the Father and the Son transmits something of the infinite hatred for sin that exists in God Himself, and something of His will to oppose the "evil of guilt," and His ordaining of the "evil of pain" by His avenging justice for His greater glory and for the restoration of order in the universe. An analogous sentiment is shared, in the innermost parts of the soul, under the direct influence of the Spirit of fear. Above all else, it is energetic detestation for sin dictated by charity; in addition, it is a sentiment of reverence for the infinite grandeur of Him whose sovereign goodness deserves to be the supreme end of each of our acts, without the least selfish deviation toward sin. The godlike mode of the Spirit of fear is measured by the holiness of God.⁶

Related Virtues

The gifts of the Holy Ghost are intimately related to each other and to the ensemble of Christian virtues. This is because both the gifts and the virtues are inseparable from supernatural charity, their *form* and their soul. However, each of the gifts is especially related to one or several infused virtues, which it perfects on account of their great affinity. The gift of fear is especially related to hope, temperance, religion and humility.

1) *Hope*. Man feels a natural inclination to love himself excessively, to presume that he is something, that he is able to do much in the pursuit of eternal beatitude. Such is the sin of presumption, the contrary of the virtue of hope, which can be uprooted only by the gift of fear. For fear gives us that *supernatural* awareness of our absolute impotence

6. *Los dones del Espiritu Santo*, pp. 337-38.

before God and, as a consequence, inclines us to rely only on the omnipotent help of God, the formal motive of hope. Without the gift of fear, the virtue of hope would never be completely perfect in us.⁷

Speaking on this subject, Father Philipon says:

Hope leads the human soul, conscious of its fragility and misery, to take refuge in God, whose merciful omnipotence is the only thing that can deliver it from all evil. Thus, the spirit of fear and theological hope, the sense of our weakness and of God's omnipotence, help each other in us. The gift of fear thus becomes one of the most precious aids to Christian hope. The weaker and more miserable one feels, the more capable of falling one feels, the more one takes refuge in God, just as a child takes refuge in his father's arms.⁸

2) *Temperance*. The gift of fear looks principally at God, Whom we must avoid offending, and in this sense it pertains to the virtue of hope, as we have already indicated. But secondarily fear can also look at any other thing which would be able to help man avoid offending God. In this sense the gift of fear helps to correct the disorderly tendency by which a man experiences a strong attraction to carnal delight, by repressing or controlling it through fear of the Lord and thus aiding and strengthening the virtue of temperance. Without the reinforcement of the gift of fear, temperance would be unable to always and everywhere triumph over the violence of the disorderly passions.⁹

3) *Religion*. Religion is the virtue that regulates the cult, or worship, owed to the majesty of God. When this virtue is perfected by the gift of fear, it reaches its greatest potential and full perfection. The cult of divinity abounds, then, with that reverential fear that even the angels experience before the majesty of God: *tremunt Potestates*,¹⁰ with that holy fear which expresses itself in profound adoration before the infinite perfection of God: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts" (Isa. 6:3).

The supreme model of this reverence before the grandeur and majesty of God is Christ Himself. If we could contemplate the humanity of Jesus, we would see it overwhelmed by *reverence* before the Word

7. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 19, a. 9, ad 1 and 2; q. 141, a. 1, ad 3.

8. *Los dones del Espiritu Santo*, p. 339.

9. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 141, a. 3, ad 3.

10. Preface of the Mass.

of God, to Whom it was hypostatically united, that is, forming one Divine Person with Him.

This is the reverence the Holy Ghost places in our souls by means of the gift of fear. He carefully fosters it in us, but moderates it and unites it with the gift of *piety*, which places in our souls a sentiment of love and filial tenderness, fruit of our divine adoption, which allows us to call God our *Father*.

4) *Humility*. The infinite contrast between the greatness and sanctity of God and our incredible littleness and misery is the basis and root of Christian humility; but only the gift of fear acting intensely in the soul raises humility to the sublime perfection that we admire in the saints. Let us see how a contemporary theologian explains this doctrine:

A man especially loves his own grandeur, and he loves to be considered greater than he really is. This is the result of pride; humility reduces this self-magnification, so that a man will not pretend to be more than he is. The gift of fear acts in this matter by submerging the soul in the abyss of its own nothingness before God in the depths of its own misery before the divine justice and majesty. And thus, when the soul is permeated with this gift, when it sees that it is nothing when compared to God, and that it has nothing of itself but misery and sin, it does not seek its own glory apart from God nor does it judge itself to be worthy of anything but disdain and punishment. Only in this way does humility reach its perfection. Such was the humility that we see in the saints, who had a complete disdain for themselves.¹¹

While it is most closely related to these four fundamental virtues, the gift of fear also exercises its influence over several other virtues, which are related in some manner to the first ones. There is no virtue, be it theological or cardinal, that does not receive the influence of some gift. Thus, through temperance, the gift of fear acts upon *chastity*, elevating it to the most exquisite delicacy; on the virtue of *meekness*, by totally repressing disordered anger; on the virtue of *modesty*, by suppressing any disorderly internal or external bodily movements. Moreover, it combats the passions that, together with vain-glory, are the daughters of pride: boastfulness, presumption, hypocrisy, pertinacity, discord, insolence and disobedience.¹²

11. I. Menéndez-Reigada, S.J., *Los dones del Espíritu Santo y la perfección cristiana*, pp. 579-80; cf. also St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 19, a. 9, ad 4.

12. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 132, a. 5.

Effects of the Gift of Fear

The sanctifying effects of the gift of fear in souls are of the greatest value.¹³ The following are the primary salutary effects:

1) *A lively sentiment of the grandeur and majesty of God, which arouses in the soul a profound adoration filled with reverence and humility.* This is the most characteristic effect of the gift of fear, and it follows from its very definition. The soul that is acted upon by this gift feels itself transported by an irresistible force before the grandeur and majesty of God, which makes even the angels tremble (*tremunt Potestates*). Before this infinite majesty the soul feels as if it is nothing. It is overwhelmed with a sentiment that is so strong and penetrating as regards reverence, submission and subjection that it would like, were it possible, to be consumed and to suffer a thousand deaths for God.

Then it is that humility reaches its apex. The soul feels the ardent desire to "suffer and be despised for God" (St. John of the Cross). Not the slightest thought of vanity or presumption occurs to it. It sees its own misery so clearly that, when other praise it, it believes that they are ridiculing it (The Curé of Ars). Prior to entering a town, St. Dominic would kneel at the gate to plead with God not to chastise that town for admitting such a great sinner as himself. There is an infallible way to attract the good will and friendship of these servants of God who have attained such heights: insult them and cover them with reproaches (St. Teresa of Jesus).

This respect and reverence for the majesty of God is also manifested in all the things which have any relationship with God. The church or oratory, the priest, the sacred vessels, the images of the saints—all are regarded and treated with the greatest respect and veneration. The gift of piety produces similar effects, but from another point of view, as we shall see.

This aspect of the gift of fear will continue forever in heaven.¹⁴

There it will not be possible, given the impeccability of the blessed, to have any fear of offending God, but the gift will remain for all eternity to express reverence and subjection before the infinite grandeur and

13. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 19, a. 9.

14. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 11.

majesty of God, constantly astonishing the minds and hearts of the saints.

2) *A great horror of sin and a lively contrition for having committed it.* With its faith illuminated by the splendor of the gifts of understanding and knowledge and its hope subjected to the action of the gift of fear, by which it directly comes before the divine majesty, the soul comes to understand as never before the almost infinite malice contained in any offense against God, however insignificant it may appear.

The Holy Ghost, Who wishes to purify the soul for the divine union, subjects it to the action of the gift of fear so that it understands the rigor with which divine justice, offended by sin, must punish in the next life if penance is not done in this life. The poor soul experiences a mortal anguish that reaches its greatest intensity in the terrifying *night of the soul*, before it reaches the supreme peak of Christian perfection. The soul feels as if it is condemned and has nothing else to hope for. In reality, it is then that the virtue of hope reaches an incredible degree of heroism, because the soul has now reached the point of "hoping against hope," like another Abraham (Rom. 4:18), and utters anew the sublime cry of Job, "Slay me though he might, I will wait for him" (Job 13:15).

The horror that these souls experience in face of sin is so great that St. Aloysius Gonzaga fell at the feet of his confessor to accuse himself of two light venial sins. St. Alphonsus Ligouri experienced a similar phenomenon upon hearing a blasphemy being uttered. St. Teresa of Jesus writes that there could be no death more terrible for her than to think that she had offended God (*Life*, chap. 34). And at the mere thought of the possibility of his soul being condemned and losing God, St. Louis Beltran would be overcome with an impressive trembling.

The repentance of such souls for the slightest fault is most profound. From it proceeds the anxious desire to make reparation, a thirst for self-immolation, an irresistible tendency to crucify oneself in a thousand ways, which these souls experience constantly. They are not mad; this is a natural consequence of the action of the Holy Ghost through the gift of fear.

3) *An extreme vigilance to avoid the slightest occasion of offending God.* This is a logical consequence of the previous effect. These souls fear nothing so much as offending God. They have seen clearly, in the contemplative light of the gifts, that in reality there is only one evil

in the world and that the others do not deserve to be called evil. How far these souls are from voluntarily placing themselves in the occasion of sin!

No one is as apprehensive as they are to flee with the greatest rapidity and promptness from any possibility or danger of offending God. Their extreme vigilance and constant attention cause them to live, under the special movement of the Holy Ghost, with such a purity of conscience that at times it seems impossible to receive sacramental absolution because of a lack of matter and they must be satisfied with confessing some sin from their past life and thus renewing their sorrow and their repentance.

4) *Perfect detachment from all created things.* As we shall see, the gift of knowledge produces this effect in the soul, but from another point of view. The gifts are mutually interrelated among themselves and with charity, and thus they mutually influence each other.¹⁵

The soul that, through the gift of fear, has become aware of the grandeur and majesty of God must necessarily consider all created things as base and useless (cf. Phil. 3:8). Honors, wealth, power, dignity—all are considered less than straw and unworthy of a moment's attention. We need only recall the effect produced in St. Teresa of Avila when her friend Doña Luisa de la Cerda showed her some precious jewelry; the saint could not understand how people could have such a great esteem for little crystals that shine a bit more than the common ones: "I only laughed to myself, thinking what a pity it is that people esteem such things, remembering what the Lord has laid up for us and reflecting how impossible it would be for me to set any store by these things, even if I tried to make myself do so, unless the Lord were to allow me to forget those others."¹⁶

The Beatitudes and Fruits of Fear

According to the Angelic Doctor, two beatitudes are related to the gift of fear: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3), and "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:5).

15. Cf. *ibid.*, I-II, q. 68, a. 5.

16. *The Life*, chap. 38, n. 4.

The first corresponds *directly* to the gift of fear, because, in virtue of the filial reverence that it causes us to experience before God, it impels us not to seek our own grandeur nor to exalt ourselves (pride) nor to become attached to external goods (honors and wealth). All this pertains to *poverty of spirit*, whether as the annihilation of the proud and puffed-up spirit, of which St. Augustine speaks, or as the detachment from all temporal things through the instigation of the Holy Ghost, as St. Ambrose and St. Jerome expound.¹⁷

Indirectly the gift of fear is also related to the beatitude that pertains to those who weep and mourn.¹⁸ The reason for this is that from the knowledge of the divine excellence and our own littleness and misery follows the disdain of all earthly things and a renunciation of all carnal delights, accompanied by weeping and mourning of one's past sins. Whence it is evident that the gift of fear moderates all the passions, whether of the irascible appetite or of the concupiscible appetite. The reverential fear of the divine majesty offended by sin restrains the impetus of the irascible passions (hope, despair, courage, fear and anger) and rules and moderates the power and impulses of the concupiscible passions (love, hatred, desire, aversion, joy and sadness). For that reason this is a gift of indescribable value, although in the list of the gifts it occupies the last place.

As regards the fruits of the Holy Ghost, the following pertain to the gift of fear: *modesty*, which is a consequence of the reverence of man for the divine majesty; and *continence* and *chastity*, which follow upon the moderation of the concupiscible passions as a proper effect of the gift of fear.¹⁹

Opposed Vices

The principle vice opposed to the gift of fear is *pride*, as St. Gregory states, but in a much more profound manner than to the virtue of humility.²⁰ The gift of fear is fixed especially on the eminence and majesty of God, before whom man, *by an instinct of the Holy Ghost*, is aware of his own nothingness and vileness. Humility likewise is fixed on the grandeur of God, in contrast to the nothingness of man, but in the light of reason illuminated by

17. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 19, a. 12.

18. Cf. *ibid.*, ad 2.

19. Cf. *ibid.*, ad 4. Cf. also Gal. 5:22-23.

20. Cf. *Moralia*, bk. 1, chap. 32; M.L. 75: 547ab; and St. Thomas, *Summa*, I-II, q. 68, a. 6, ad 2.

faith and in a *human* and imperfect modality.²¹ Whence it is evident that the gift of fear excludes pride in a *more lofty manner* than does the virtue of humility. Fear excludes even the root and *beginning* of pride, as St. Thomas states.²² Therefore, pride is opposed to the gift of fear in a more profound and radical manner than it is to the virtue of humility.

Indirectly, the vice of *presumption* is also opposed to the gift of fear because as it injures the divine justice by trusting inordinately in the divine mercy. In this sense St. Thomas says that presumption is opposed to the gift of fear in so far as it disdains something divine.²³

Means to Foster This Gift

As explained earlier, the gifts of the Holy Ghost can only be actuated by the Holy Ghost Himself. This is different from the infused virtues, which we can actuate ourselves under the influence of a simple actual grace, which God always places at our disposal like the air we breathe. However, we can and should ask the Holy Ghost to put His gifts into action in us, while we do everything that we can on our part to *dispose* ourselves to receive the divine action that will put the gifts in motion.

In addition to the more general means of attracting the merciful gaze of the Holy Ghost—recollection, purity of heart, fidelity to grace, frequent invocation of the Holy Ghost, and so on—there are other methods which are more closely connected with the gift of fear.

1) *To meditate frequently on the infinite grandeur and majesty of God.*

We can never by our own poor discursive methods acquire contemplative knowledge, which is given to the soul by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.²⁴ But we can do something by reflecting on the power and majesty of God, Who made all things out of nothing (Gen. 1:1); Who calls all the stars in the heavens by their names, to which they respond instantly and quivering with respect (Bar. 3:33-36); Who is more admirable

21. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 161, aa. 1 and 2.

22. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 19, a. 9, ad 4; q. 161, a. 2, ad 3.

23. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 130, a. 2, ad 1; q. 21, a. 3.

24. "To meditate on hell, for instance, is to see a painted lion; to contemplate hell, is to see a living lion" (L. Lallemand, S.J., *Spiritual Teaching* [London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1928], p. 264). As is known, contemplation is an effect of the intellectual gifts of the Holy Ghost.

and imposing than the turbulent sea (Ps. 92:4); Who will come upon the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty to judge the living and the dead (Luke 21:27); and before Whom the all the principalities and powers will tremble for all eternity, *tremunt Potestates*.

2) *To accustom oneself to converse with God with filial confidence, filled with reverence and respect.* We should never forget that God is our Father, but that He is also the God of terrible grandeur and majesty. Sometimes pious souls forget the latter and allow themselves to become excessively familiar with God and even to give expression to irreverent audacity. It is certainly incredible to see the extent to which the Lord gives expression of His familiarity with souls that are pleasing to Him, but it is *necessary that He take the initiative*. Meanwhile the soul should remain in an attitude of reverence and submission, which is very far from being prejudicial to the sweet and intimate confidence of adopted children.

3) *To meditate frequently on the infinite malice of sin and to arouse a great horror for it.* In itself, love is much more powerful and efficacious than fear as a motive for avoiding sin. Nevertheless, the consideration of fear is a great help in keeping souls from sin. The recollection of the terrible punishment that God has prepared for those who definitively reject His law would be sufficient to make us flee from sin if we would meditate on it. It is a fearful thing, as St. Paul says (Heb. 10:31), to fall into the hands of an offended God. We should think frequently of the evil of sin, especially in times of temptation. It is necessary to arouse such a deep horror of sin that we would be disposed to lose all things and even life itself rather than commit sin. To this end, it will be of great help if we *avoid all dangerous occasions* that may lead us to sin; practice the daily *examination of conscience* with fidelity (in order to avoid sin and voluntary faults and to weep for those we have committed), and, above all, *to consider Jesus Christ crucified as the victim of propitiation for our crimes and sins*.

4) *To be meek and humble in dealing with our neighbor.* If one has a clear concept that the God of infinite majesty has mercifully pardoned him ten thousand talents, then he cannot dare to exact with haughtiness and disdain the ten coins owed him by his neighbor (Matt. 18:23-3). We must pardon injuries and treat our neighbors with humility and meekness; we should consider them to be better than we are, at least in the sense that they probably would not have resisted grace as much

as we if they had received the gifts that God has given us so abundantly. He who has committed any mortal sin in his life can never humiliate himself enough; there is no place so low that it is not too high for one who, having sinned mortally, at one time merited an eternal place at the feet of Satan.

5) *To beg frequently of the Holy Ghost a reverential fear of God.* When all is said and done, every perfect disposition is a gift of God that can only be attained by humble and persevering prayer. The liturgy is filled with sublime pleas by which we can implore holy fear: "Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear: for I am afraid of thy judgments" (Ps. 118:120) and "Establish thy word to thy servant in thy fear" (Ps. 118:38), for example. These and other such supplications should spring frequently from our hearts and our lips, for "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ecclus. 1:16), and it is necessary to work for our salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12), as the Holy Ghost Himself warns us through the Psalmist: "Serve ye the Lord with fear: and rejoice unto him with trembling" (Ps. 2:11).

The Gift of Fortitude

IN the ascending scale of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the second place is occupied by the gift of *fortitude*, charged primarily with perfecting the infused virtue of the same name.

We will study it here with the care and attention that its great importance in the spiritual life deserves.¹

Nature of the Gift of Fortitude

The gift of fortitude is a supernatural habit that strengthens the soul for the practice, under the movement of the Holy Ghost, of every type of heroic virtue, with invincible confidence of overcoming any dangers or difficulties that may arise.

Let us explain this definition a little, word by word.

It is a supernatural habit, like the other gifts and infused virtues.

That strengthens the soul: Its precise function is to elevate the powers of the soul to a divine plane.

For the practice, under the movement of the Holy Ghost: The operation of this gift, as of the other gifts, is always *under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost*, in such wise that the soul does not reason or discourse, but acts by a kind of instinctive interior impulse that proceeds directly from the Holy Ghost.

Of every type of heroic virtue: Although the virtue of fortitude has the same name as the gift by which it is perfected, the gift extends to all the heroic actions of the other virtues, because this heroism demands an extraordinary

1. Cf. our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 412-19.

fortitude that is beyond the power of the virtue alone.² Therefore, the gift of fortitude, since it extends to the acts of various virtues, requires in its turn to be directed by the gift of counsel.³

Father Lallemand writes of this gift that it is:

An habitual disposition which the Holy Spirit communicates to the soul and to the body both to do and to suffer extraordinary things; to undertake the most arduous actions; to expose ourselves to the most formidable dangers; to undergo the most toilsome labours; to endure the most grievous pains, and that with constancy and heroism.⁴

With invincible confidence: This is one of the clearest marks of distinction between the virtue of fortitude and the gift of fortitude. The virtue of fortitude, says St. Thomas,⁵ also gives strength to the soul for overcoming obstacles, but it is the gift alone that imparts the invincible confidence of success.

Addressing this point, Father Arrighini writes:

Despite the similarity of the definition, the gift of fortitude should not be confused with the cardinal virtue of the same name. Although both suppose a certain firmness and energy of spirit, the virtue of fortitude has its limits in human power, which it cannot surpass; the gift, on the contrary, relies on the Divine power, according to the words of the Prophet: "Through my God I shall go over a wall" (Ps. 17:30), that is, I will overcome all obstacles in order to reach the final end.

Secondly, if the cardinal virtue of fortitude gives enough courage to face such obstacles in general, it does not infuse the confidence to face and overcome all of them, as the analogous gift of the Holy Ghost does.

Moreover, the virtue of fortitude, precisely because it is limited by human power, does not extend equally to all kinds of difficulties. For this reason, there are people who easily overcome the temptations of pride but not those of the flesh, or who avoid a certain kind of danger but not another, and so on. The gift of fortitude, on the other hand, relying completely on the Divine omnipotence, extends to everything, suffices for everything, and makes one exclaim with Job: "Deliver me, O Lord, and set me beside thee, and let any man's hand fight against me" (Job 17:3).

2. "The higher a potency," writes St. Thomas, "the more it extends to a greater number of things. . . . Therefore, the gift of fortitude extends to *all* the difficulties that may arise in human things. . . . The principal act of the gift of fortitude is to withstand *all* difficulties, whether in the passions or in the operations" (*In III Sent.*, d. 34, q. 3, a. 1, q. 2, sol.).

3. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 139, a. 1, ad 3.

4. *Spiritual Teaching* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1928), p. 156.

5. *Summa*, II-II, q. 139, a. 1, ad 1.

Finally, the virtue of fortitude does not always attain its object, as it is not proper to man to overcome all dangers and win all battles. But God can easily do this, and since the gift of fortitude infuses in us the Divine power, with it man can readily overcome all dangers and enemies, fight and win every battle, and repeat with the Apostle: "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

Because of this it is easy to understand that the gift of fortitude is far superior to the virtue of the same name. The latter draws its strength from grace to the extent human power permits; the former, to the extent necessary to fight and win. The first always operates in the *human mode*; the second, in the *Divine mode*. Fortitude as a virtue is always linked to the restraint and judgment of Christian prudence; the gift, on the other hand, impels one to take resolutions that, without it, would seem presumptuous, reckless, exaggerated. This is why even men of faith and sense at times misjudge and criticize heroic actions of our saints. They judge them according to prudence, even Christian prudence if you will; they judge them according to the way they would act themselves. They do not consider that in the saints there is a much more powerful and higher motor that can make them run and jump to heights unattainable by their own poor legs. It is necessary to have this in mind in order to judge rightfully those apparent madresses of the saints.⁶

There is, indeed, a great difference between the potentials of the *acquired* virtue, the *infused* virtue, and the *gift* of fortitude, even though the three share the same name. Thus:

a) *Natural or acquired fortitude* strengthens the soul for undertaking the greatest labors and for exposing oneself to the greatest dangers—as is evident in the lives of many pagan heroes—but not without a certain fear or anxiety that proceeds from the clear perception of the weakness of one's own powers, which are the only ones utilized by the acquired virtue.

b) *Infused fortitude* relies on the Divine help, which of itself is omnipotent and invincible, but it operates in a *human mode*, that is, according to the light of reason illuminated by faith, which does not rid the soul completely of all fear.

c) *The gift of fortitude*, on the other hand, enables the soul to undertake the greatest work and expose itself to the greatest dangers with great confidence and security, because the Holy Ghost Himself moves the soul, not through the dictates of simple prudence, but through the

6. *Il Dio ignoto*, pp. 334-36.

lofty direction of the gift of counsel, that is, through reasons that are entirely Divine.⁷

Importance and Necessity

The gift of fortitude is absolutely necessary for the perfection of the cardinal virtue of fortitude, for the perfection of the other infused virtues, and, at times, for perseverance in the state of grace. Let us examine it more closely.

a) *For the perfection of the cardinal virtue of fortitude:* The fundamental reason for this has been given above. Although the virtue of fortitude strengthens the soul against every kind of difficulty and danger, it cannot extend to all possible situations as long as it operates in the purely *human mode* of reason enlightened by faith. It is necessary that the gift of fortitude remove from the virtue of fortitude all fear and indecision, so that it can be subjected entirely to the *divine mode* of action that is imparted by the Holy Ghost.⁸ Father Arrighini explains this doctrine in these words:

The first effect of the gift of fortitude is that of completing the cardinal virtue of the same name and of taking it to a point it could never reach by itself, with the merely human energies it can utilize. One must agree that to these energies the gift of fortitude adds other supernatural energies that invigorate the will, inflame the sentiment, excite the imagination and all the other more noble faculties of the soul so as to dispose them serenely to the greatest risks. Experience shows, furthermore, that the supernatural vigor of such a gift often extends to the body as well, communicating to it an endurance and energy that is far superior to the ordinary and that cannot but amaze those who do not know its divine source.

Due to this source, that is, to the fortitude infused by the Holy Ghost, especially in the sacrament of confirmation, the world has witnessed incredible marvels throughout twenty centuries. It has seen millions of souls—of rich and poor, of wise and ignorant, of old and young, of all states and conditions, from all latitudes, amidst all dangers—strong, courageous, constant in fulfilling their Christian duties, in overcoming the temptations of the world, the devil and the flesh, in fighting and conquering every sort of enemy and danger. The Holy Ghost Himself gives His own testimony in the words of St. Paul: “Who by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,

7. Cf. John of St. Thomas, *In I-II*, d. 18, a. 6.

8. *Summa*, II-II, q. 139, a. 1, ad 1.

recovered strength from weakness, became valiant in battle, put to flight the armies of the foreigners" (Heb. 11:33-34).

Thus we know what so many Christians have done through the gift of fortitude. Let us see now what they have endured and suffered: "Women received their dead raised to life again. But others were racked, not accepting deliverance that they might find a better resurrection. And others had trial of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bands and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted: Of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens, and in the caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:35-38). Behold what the whole world has been able to see and admire.⁹

b) *For the perfection of the other infused virtues:* A virtue is called perfect when its act springs from the soul with energy, promptness and perseverance. This constant heroism is manifestly supernatural, and it can be explained only by the *supernatural mode* of operation of the gift of fortitude. Thus the perfection of any of the virtues will at some time or other require the operation of the gift of fortitude.

c) *For perseverance in the state of grace:* There are occasions when Christians are confronted, suddenly and inexorably with the decision either to practice heroic virtue in a given instance or to commit a mortal sin. On these occasions, which are much more frequent than some imagine, the simple virtue of fortitude is not sufficient. By the very fact that these violent temptations are sudden and unexpected, and can be accepted or refused in a split-second, while the operation of the virtues of prudence and fortitude is slow and discursive, one will need the prompt intervention of the gifts of *counsel and fortitude*. It is precisely on this point, as we have seen, that St. Thomas bases his teaching on the necessity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, even for eternal salvation.¹⁰

We refer again to Father Lallemand:

This gift is exceedingly necessary on certain occasions, when we feel ourselves assailed with pressing temptations, to resist which we must resolve to lose our goods, our honor, or our life. It is then that the Holy Spirit powerfully assists with his counsel and strength a faithful soul, which, distrusting itself and convinced of its own weakness and nothingness, implores his succor and places all its confidence in him.

9. *Il Dio ignoto*, pp. 336-38.

10. Cf. *Summa*, I-II, q. 68, a. 2.

On such occasions ordinary graces are not sufficient—there is need of extraordinary lights and aids; and therefore it is that the Prophet joins together the gift of counsel and that of fortitude; the one to enlighten the mind, and the other to fortify the heart.¹¹

On this subject, another excellent author writes:¹²

In view of what has just been said, it is easy to understand that the gift of fortitude is necessary not only for the heroes and martyrs or for the realization of extraordinary undertakings; like the other gifts of the Holy Ghost, it is at times necessary for all men in order for them to achieve eternal salvation and, for the same reason, to lead a Christian life and to fight and win this great battle that is the life of man on earth, as the Holy Ghost Himself warns us through Job: “The life of man upon earth is a warfare” (Job 7:1).

Experience shows this. Life is a constant battle against everything and everyone. It is a battle against our own corrupt nature, for all of us can say with the Apostle himself, who was taken to the third heaven: “I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members” (Rom. 7:23). We have to resist this other law if we do not want to come to the terrible conclusion of the pagan poet who said: “I see the better and approve it, but I follow the worse.”¹³

a) *The battle against our passions*: Like a snappish dog, these passions hide in the depths of the heart, ready to bark and bite at the least provocation. The smallest thing suffices to suddenly arouse them: the sight of a person, the reading of a page of a novel or newspaper, a word, a smile, a gesture. But how much struggle and fatigue to control them and submit them to upright reason!

b) *The battle against the world*: This is the battle against its corrupt and corrupting morals, its bad friendships, its innumerable seductions, its scandalous fashions, its pleasures, its impure parties. . . . Plato himself, although a pagan, said it is impossible to live chastely for a long time in the midst of the world. Indeed, even an angel would end up falling if it did not receive a special help from the Holy Ghost.

c) *The battle against the devil*: The devil is the worst and most terrible of enemies. He is neither seen nor felt; it is not known whence he comes nor where he goes. But as St. Peter says, it is certain that he is

11. *Spiritual Teaching*, p. 157.

12. Father Arrighini, *Il Dio ignoto*, pp. 338-40.

13. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I, 7, vv. 20-21.

everywhere and that he goes about us “as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). If Christ Our Lord Himself was tempted three times by the devil, who among us can remain secure and calm?

All of us have to fight constantly, against ourselves, against our passions, against the world, against the devil. And there are still many other enemies: sicknesses that endanger health, misfortunes, disgraces, ever-recurring griefs, worries, annoyances. . . . Job was right when he said that the life of man on earth is continuous and endless warfare.

How, then, can man by himself—even when aided by the Christian virtue of fortitude, which activates only his human energies—even face, much less overcome, so many and so powerful enemies? It is easy to understand that he needs something else: a divine help, a strictly superhuman fortitude, which is precisely the fortitude that the gift of the Holy Ghost can infuse into his soul and his very members.

Effects of the Gift of Fortitude

Of the remarkable effects that the gift of fortitude produces in the soul, the following are the principal ones:

1) It gives the soul a relentless vigor in the practice of virtue. This is an inevitable result of the *supernatural* mode by which the virtue of fortitude operates when under the influence of the gift of fortitude. At such times the soul does not feel any weakness or lack of confidence in the practice of virtue. It may suffer from the obstacles and dangers it encounters, but it proceeds against them with supernatural energy in spite of all difficulties.

Perhaps no one has more forcefully expressed the disposition of such souls than St. Teresa of Jesus when she wrote:

As I say, it is most important—all-important, indeed—that they should begin well by making an *earnest and most determined resolve* not to halt until they reach their goal [perfection], whatever may come, whatever may happen to them, however hard they may have to labour, whoever may complain of them, whether they reach their goal or die on the road or have no heart to confront the trails which they meet, whether the very world dissolves before them.¹⁴

14. *The Way of Perfection*, Peers transl. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1946), p. 89. Emphasis ours.

This is obviously *superhuman* and a very clear effect of the gift of fortitude.

Father Meynard fittingly summarizes the principal effects of this superhuman energy:

The effects of the gift of fortitude are both internal and external. Internally there is a vast area of a generosity and sacrifice that frequently reaches the point of heroism. There are incessant and victorious battles against the temptations of Satan, against self-love, against impatience. Externally there are new and magnificent victories by the Holy Ghost over error and vice; the poor body itself, sharing in the effect of a truly divine fortitude, abandons itself with ardor to the practice of the most heroic mortification or suffers without flinching the most cruel agonies and pains. The gift of fortitude is, therefore, the true principle and source of great things undertaken or suffered for God.¹⁵

2) *It completely destroys all lukewarmness in the service of God.* This is a natural consequence of the superhuman energy imparted to the soul by the gift of fortitude. Lukewarmness is a tuberculosis of the soul that altogether paralyzes many persons on the way to perfection. It is due almost always to a lack of vigor and fortitude in the practice of virtue. Lukewarm souls consider that it is too much of an effort to have to conquer themselves in so many things and to maintain their spirit from one day to another in the monotonous fulfillment of the details of their daily obligations. Most souls give in to weariness and renounce the battle, with the result that henceforth they live a purely mechanical life of routine without horizons, if indeed they do not turn their back completely on the life of virtue. Only the gift of fortitude, which strengthens the powers of the soul in a supernatural way, is an efficacious remedy for destroying—absolutely and completely—lukewarmness in the service of God.

3) *It makes the soul intrepid and valiant in every type of danger or against every kind of enemy.* This is another of the great effects of the gift of fortitude and is particularly marked in the lives of the saints. The apostles, cowardly and fearful, abandoned their Master on the eve of Good Friday. Peter denied Him three times after having promised Him that he would die for Him! Yet they present themselves once more to the world on Pentecost Sunday with a superhuman fortitude and

15. *Traité de la vie intérieure*, I, 264.

courage. They fear no one. Forbidden by the leaders of the Synagogue to preach in the name of Jesus, they do so anyway because “we ought to obey God, rather than men” (Acts 5:29). They are beaten and insulted, but they leave the council “rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus” (Acts 5:41). They confess the teachings of Christ until the end of their days and seal their apostolate with their own blood. Peter, who had feared a servant girl, who had readily denied his Master, dies with incredible courage, crucified with his head downward, confessing the Master Whom he had denied. All this was the supernatural effect of the gift of fortitude, which the apostles received in an immense plenitude on the morning of Pentecost.

In addition to the apostles, we have countless examples of saints. We can hardly imagine the difficulties and dangers that a St. Louis, King of France, had to overcome to lead the crusade; a St. Catherine of Siena, to make the Pope return to Rome; a St. Teresa, to reform a whole religious order; a St. Joan of Arc, to battle against the enemies of God and her country, and so many others. They scaled veritable mountains of dangers and difficulties; nothing could stop them. Confiding solely in God, they forged ahead with superhuman energy until they received the laurel of victory. It was simply this marvelous effect of the gift of fortitude that dominated their spirit.

4) *It enables the soul to suffer the greatest pains with joy and patience.* Although resignation is a very praiseworthy virtue, it is nonetheless imperfect. The saints do not manifest it in their lives once they have reached the perfection of virtue. In a strict sense, the saints do not resign themselves to suffering; they go to meet it joyfully. Sometimes this “*folly of the cross*” is manifested in incredible acts of penance and mortification, as in the case of Saints Mary Magdalen, Margaret of Cortona, Henry Suso, Peter of Alcantara, and others. At other times it finds expression in the heroic patience with which holy souls endure the greatest conceivable sickness and pain, their faces radiant with joy, as in the case of St. Theresa of Lisieux, who said: “I have come to a point where I cannot suffer any longer, because all suffering is sweet to me.”¹⁶ This is the language of a truly superhuman heroism which proceeds directly from the intense operation in the soul of the gift of fortitude!

16. St. Thérèse of Lisieux: *Her Last Conversations*, May 29 (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1977), p. 52.

5) *It gives the soul the quality of heroism in small things as in great things.* No greater fortitude is required to suffer the martyr's death at one stroke than to endure without failing the prolonged *martyrdom of pinpricks* which is the heroic fulfillment of one's daily duties to the smallest detail. Faithful perseverance in the performance of even the smallest duties supposes a constant heroism that only the intense action of the gift of fortitude can give.

Corresponding Beatitude and Fruits

Following the teaching of St. Augustine, St. Thomas attributes the fourth beatitude to the gift of fortitude: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). Fortitude is concerned with arduous and difficult things, and the desire to sanctify oneself, not in any manner whatever but with a veritable hunger and thirst, is extremely arduous and difficult.¹⁷ Thus we see that souls completely dominated by the gift of fortitude have an insatiable desire to do and to suffer great things for God. Already in this world they begin to receive their reward in the increase of virtues and the intense spiritual joy with which God sometimes floods their soul.

The fruits of the Holy Ghost that correspond to the gift of fortitude are *patience* and *longanimity*. The first, to endure suffering and evil with heroism; the second, in order not to fall away from the prolonged and continual practice of good.¹⁸

Opposed Vices

According to St. Gregory, the vices opposed to the gift of fortitude are *inordinate fear* or *timidity*, often accompanied by a certain *natural sloth* that proceeds from the love of one's own ease and comfort, preventing one from undertaking great things for the glory of God and impelling one to avoid suffering and rejection.¹⁹ Father Lallemand makes the following observations on the vice of timidity:

It is impossible to say how many omissions fear makes us be guilty of. There are but very few who do for God and their neighbor all that they might do.

17. Cf. *Summa*, II-II, q. 139, a. 2.

18. Loc. cit., ad 3.

19. Cf. *Moralia*, chap. 49; M.L. 75: 593.

We ought to imitate the saints in fearing nothing but sin, like St. John Chrysostom; in braving risks, like St. Francis Xavier; in desiring insults and persecutions, like St. Ignatius.²⁰

Means to Foster This Gift

In addition to the general means for the increase and strengthening of the gifts (such as recollection, prayer, fidelity to grace, invoking the Holy Ghost), the following are more immediately concerned with strengthening the gift of fortitude.

a) *Accustoming ourselves to the exact fulfillment of our duties in spite of any repugnance.* There are some heroic acts that surpass our powers at any given moment, but there can be no doubt that, with the assistance of the ordinary grace that God denies no one, we can all do much more than we actually do. We shall never attain the heroism of the saints until the gift of fortitude operates intensely in us, but this operation is not likely to be effected in us by the Holy Ghost as a reward for our voluntary sloth and lukewarmness. But to him who does the best he can, the assistance of God will never be lacking. On the other hand, no one can complain at not receiving the help of God through the operation of the gift of fortitude if he has not done all that he can. We must pray as if all depended upon God, but we must strive as if all depended upon ourselves.

b) *Not asking God to remove our cross but only that He give us the strength to carry it with holiness.* The gift of fortitude is given to holy souls so that they will be able to bear the great crosses and tribulations through which they must pass in order to arrive at the height of sanctity. If on experiencing any kind of suffering, or on feeling the weight of a cross that Providence sends us, we begin to complain and to ask God to take it from us, why should we then be surprised if the gifts of the Holy Ghost and especially the gift of fortitude do not operate in us? If, on being tested in small things, God finds that we are weak, how can His purifying action proceed in us? We should never complain about crosses, but we should ask the Lord that He give us the strength to bear them. Then we should remain tranquil and remember that God will never be outdone in generosity.

20. *Spiritual Teaching*, IV, chap. 4, a. 6.

c) *Practicing voluntary mortification with courage or weakness.* Nothing so strengthens an individual against the cold than accustoming himself to live outdoors. The person who freely embraces suffering ends up not fearing it and may eventually deliberately seek it with a kind of spiritual joy. This does not mean that one must scourge the body with the discipline or practice the terrifying acts of penance that we read about in the lives of some of the saints. This sort of mortification is not for every soul. But there are in every life countless details and innumerable sufferings that can be accepted and eventually embraced as a means of penance and mortification. To observe silence when one feels an inclination to talk without necessity, not to complain about the inclemency of the weather or the quality of one's food and the like, to observe basic Christian politeness and fraternal charity toward those who by temperament are disagreeable or unsympathetic to us, to receive with humility and patience the ridicule, accusation or contradiction that befalls us—these and many other daily crosses we can and should accept, doing a little violence to ourselves with the help of ordinary grace. Nor is it necessary that one feel strong to be able to carry these small crosses; we can carry them amidst our weakness. In fact, St. Theresa of Lisieux used to rejoice at finding herself so weak, because then she could place all her confidence in God, expecting everything from Him.

d) *Seeking in the Eucharist strength for our souls.* The Eucharist is the bread of the angels, but also the bread of the strong. How this divine nourishment comforts and strengthens the soul! St. John Chrysostom used to say that we should rise from the Sacred Banquet with the strength of a lion to thrust ourselves into all kinds of heroic actions performed for the glory of God.²¹ It is through it that we come into direct and close contact with Christ, the true lion of Juda (Apoc. 5:5), Who finds His pleasure in transfusing into our souls some of His divine fortitude.

21. *In Io.* hom. 61: 3; M.L. 59: 260.

10

The Gift of Piety

IN the ascending scale of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, piety is the third gift. Its fundamental purpose is to perfect the infused virtue of the same name—which is derived from the cardinal virtue of justice—imparting to our relationship with God and our neighbor the filial and fraternal sense that should regulate how the children of the same family treat their father and brothers. The gift of piety communicates the *spirit of the family of God* to us.¹

Nature of the Gift of Piety

The gift of piety is a supernatural habit infused with sanctifying grace to arouse in the will, through the motion of the Holy Ghost, a filial affection for God considered as Father, and a sentiment of universal brotherhood for all men as our brothers and as children of the same heavenly Father.

It is fitting to emphasize the following in regard to this definition:

- a) The gift of piety, being an affective gift, resides in the will as a power of the soul.
- b) It differs from the infused virtue of the same name in that the virtue tends toward God as Father—like the gift—but with a *human modality*, that is, regulated by the reason illumined by faith; while the gift does so *by instinct of the Holy Ghost*, that is, with a *divine modality*, which is incomparably more perfect.
- c) The gift of piety extends to all men so far as they are children of the same heavenly Father. It also extends to everything pertaining

1. Cf. our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 387-93.

to the cult of God—perfecting the virtue of *religion* to the highest degree—or to *justice* and the other virtues related to it, fulfilling all their demands and obligations because of a nobler reason and a higher formality: It considers them as duties toward one’s brethren, who are children and family of God. Just as the virtue of piety is the *family* virtue par excellence, on a higher and more universal level, it is the gift of piety that unites and congregates, under the loving gaze of the heavenly Father, the great family of the children of God.

Importance and Necessity

The gift of piety is absolutely necessary in order to perfect to a heroic degree the matter that falls under the virtue of *justice* and the other virtues related to justice, especially those of *religion and piety*.

What a difference there is, for example, in practicing the worship of God only under the impulse of the virtue of *religion*, which presents God to us as Creator and sovereign Lord, from practicing the same worship under the movement of the gift of piety, which enables us to see God as a most loving Father! The things pertaining to the service of God (cult, prayer, sacrifice, and the like) are then fulfilled almost without effort and with exquisite perfection and delicacy: They are done in the service of the *Father*, and no longer just the God of tremendous majesty.

And as regards one’s association with other men, what a note of perfection and refinement is added to the demands of charity and justice, already so sublime of themselves, when we realize that we are all brothers and all children of the same Father!

Even as regards material things, the gift of piety can change one’s outlook completely. For those who are governed by the gift of piety, the world and all creation are the “house of the Father,” where everything that exists speaks of Him and His infinite tenderness. Such persons are able to discover without effort the religious meaning hidden in all things, for these—including the wolf, the trees, the flowers and death itself—are our *brothers*, as St. Francis of Assisi tells us. It is then that the Christian virtues acquire a most delicate nuance of exquisite perfection and refinement that would be unattainable without the influence of the gift of piety, because without the gifts of the Holy Ghost no infused virtue can reach its perfect development and expansion.

Of this gift, Father Lallemand writes:

Piety has a wide scope in the exercise of Christian justice; it reaches not only to God, but also to everything relating to him: as *Holy Scripture*, which contains his word; the Blessed, who possess him in glory; the suffering *souls in purgatory*, and those still living on the earth.

It gives us the spirit of a child toward our *superiors*, the spirit of a father toward our *inferiors*, the spirit of a brother toward our *equals*, bowels of compassion for those who are in necessity and trouble, and a tender disposition to succor them.

It is this that makes them [the saints and devout persons] afflict themselves with the afflicted, weep with them that weep, rejoice with them that are glad of heart, bear without irritation the weaknesses of the infirm and the faults of the imperfect, and make themselves all to all.²

Effects of the Gift of Piety

The effects that the intense action of the gift of piety produces in the soul are truly marvelous. The following are the principal effects:

1) *It places in the soul a truly filial tenderness toward our Heavenly Father.* This is the primary and fundamental effect of the gift of piety. The soul understands perfectly and experiences with ineffable sweetness the words of St. Paul: "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of *adoption of sons*, whereby we cry: Abba (Father). For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the *sons of God*" (Rom. 8:15-16).

St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, in whom the gift of piety was manifested to a sublime degree, could not think of these words without weeping out of love.

Upon entering her cell one day, a novice stopped, surprised at seeing the heavenly expression on her face. She was sewing busily, yet nevertheless seemed absorbed in profound contemplation. "What are you thinking about?" the young sister asked. "I am meditating on the *Our Father*," she answered. "It is so sweet to call God *our Father!*" Saying this, tears glistened in her eyes.³

Dom Columba Marmion, the saintly abbot of Maredsous, also possessed to a high degree this awareness of our adoptive divine filiation. For him God was above all our *Father*. The monastery was the "house

2. *Spiritual Teaching*, pp. 153-154. Emphasis ours.

3. *Histoire d'une âme*, chap. 12.

of the Father” and all its members formed God’s family. The same thing must be said of the whole world and of all men. Dom Marmion insists repeatedly on the necessity of cultivating this spirit of adoption that should be the Christian’s basic attitude toward God. He himself mentally prayed for this spirit of adoption at the inclination of the *Gloria Patri* at the end of each psalm in the Office.⁴ A splendid text of his invaluable work *Christ in His Mysteries* admirably summarizes his thought:

Never let us forget that all Christian life, all holiness, is *being by grace what Jesus is by nature: the Son of God*. It is this that makes the sublimity of our religion. The source of all the greatness of Jesus, the source of the value of all His states, of the fruitfulness of all His mysteries, is His divine generation and His quality of Son of God. In the same way, the saint who is the highest in heaven is the one who here below was most perfectly a child of God, who made the grace of supernatural adoption in Jesus Christ fructify the most.⁵

The favorite prayer of these souls is the *Our Father*. In it they find unfathomable treasures of doctrine and unspeakable sweetness of devotion, as St. Teresa of Jesus did: “I am astounded when I consider that in its few words are enshrined all contemplation and perfection, so that if we study it no other book seems necessary.”⁶ And her angelic daughter St. Theresa of the Child Jesus writes that the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary* “are the only prayers that elevate me, those that nourish my soul the divine way; they suffice for me.”⁷

2) *It enables us to adore the ineffable mystery of the Divine Paternity within the Trinity*. In its most sublime manifestations, the gift of piety makes us penetrate the mystery of the intimate life of God by giving us a most vivid awareness, filled with respect and adoration, of the divine paternity of the Father in relation to the Word. It is now no longer a question merely of His spiritual fatherhood of us by grace, but of His divine paternity, which is eternally fruitful in the bosom of the Holy Trinity. The soul rejoices with ineffable sweetness in the mystery of the eternal generation of the Word, which constitutes, so to speak, the

4. Cf. Dom Raymond Thibaut, *Un maître de la vie spirituelle: Dom Columba Marmion* (Desclée: 1929), especially chap. 16.

5. *Christ in His Mysteries*, p. 55. Emphasis ours.

6. *The Way of Perfection*, pp. 160-161.

7. *Histoire d'une âme*, chap. 10.

happiness of the Father. In view of this eternal and ever actual generation, the soul is impelled to be silent and to love, without any other language than that of adoration and tears. It loves to repeat in the depth of its soul the sublime words of the *Gloria*: “We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory (*propter magnam gloriam tuam*).” It is the worship and adoration of God *for His own sake* and without any consideration of the benefit the soul has received from Him. It is *pure love* in all its impressive grandeur, untainted by any selfish human element.

3) *It arouses in the soul a filial abandonment in the arms of the Heavenly Father.* Intimately penetrated with the sentiment of its adoptive divine filiation, the soul abandons itself calmly and confidently to the heavenly Father. It is not preoccupied with any care, and nothing is capable of disturbing its unalterable peace, even for an instant. The soul asks nothing and rejects nothing in regard to health or sickness, a long life or a short life, consolations or aridity, strength or weakness, persecution or praise, activity or idleness. It abandons itself completely in the arms of God, and asks only to glorify Him with all its powers, desiring that all men should realize their adoptive Divine filiation and live as true children of God, praising and glorifying the heavenly Father.

4) *It makes us see in our neighbor a son of God and a brother in Jesus Christ.* This is a natural consequence of our adoptive filiation through grace. If God is our Father, we are all sons of God and brothers in Jesus Christ, either actually or potentially. But with what forcefulness do souls dominated by the gift of piety perceive and live this sublime truth! They love all men with a great tenderness because they see them as beloved brothers in Christ, and they would like to shower upon them every kind of grace and blessing. This is the sentiment St. Paul expressed when he wrote to the Philippians (4:1): “Therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, and most desired, my joy and my crown; so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” Filled with such sentiments, the souls under the impulse of the gift of piety dedicate themselves to the works of mercy for the unfortunate and look upon them as true brothers, serving them in order to please the Father of all. Whatever sacrifices are demanded by this service to their neighbors—even to the ungrateful and unappreciative—seem little to them. In each of their brethren, they see Christ, their eldest brother, and do for them what they would do for Christ Himself. And whatever works they perform, even those that require superhuman heroism, seem so natural and easy to them

that they would be greatly surprised if anyone should consider them to be heroic. In their amazement, they would reply: "But he is my brother!" All their activities and works in the service of their neighbor are performed with the thought of the common Father of all, and the works themselves are considered as something that is owed to one's brothers in the family of God (cf. Eph. 2:19). As a result, their works become sublime acts of *religion*. Even the love that they have for the members of their own family is deeply penetrated with this lofty and sublime vision, in which they see all men as sons of God and brothers in Jesus Christ.

5) *It moves us to love and devotion for the persons and things related to the Fatherhood of God or Christian brotherhood.* The gift of piety perfects and intensifies the soul's filial love for the *Blessed Virgin Mary*, whom it considers as a tender Mother and in whom it has all the confidence that a child has in the best of mothers.

The soul tenderly loves the angels and the saints, whom it considers as its older brothers who already enjoy the continual presence of the Father in the eternal mansion of the children of God; it has a tender affection for the *souls in purgatory*, its suffering brothers whom it assists by frequent suffrages; a tender regard for the *Pope* as the Vicar of Christ on earth, visible head of the Church and father of all Christendom. It looks upon all lawful *superiors* as *fathers* and serves and obeys them in everything with true filial joy. It wishes to see its *country* imbued with the spirit of Jesus Christ in its laws and customs, and for it would willingly shed its blood or suffer the flames like another St. Joan of Arc. It has a deep veneration for *Sacred Scripture*, and reads it as if it were a letter sent from heaven by the Father to tell it what it must do or what is desired of it. It has a great respect for all holy things, especially those used for the cult and service of God (sacred vessels, monstrances, and so on), viewing them as articles for the service and glorification of the Father. St. Theresa was delighted with her office of sacristan, which permitted her to touch the sacred vessels and to see her face reflected inside the chalices.

Corresponding Beatitudes and Fruits

According to St. Thomas, there are three beatitudes that flow from the gift of piety:

11

The Gift of Counsel

ON July 26, 1956, an accident at sea stirred the whole world. The Italian ship *Andrea Doria* sank in the Atlantic off Nantucket Island. Cause? An oversight of the helmsman, who did not turn fast enough when the *Stockholm*, a Swedish ship, crossed its path.

If we only knew the accidents that occur in the souls of men every day and every hour because of a lack of direction or intuition! The virtue of prudence and, above all, the gift of counsel, which perfects it, will teach us to avoid these serious mishaps.¹

Nature of the Gift of Counsel

The gift of counsel is a supernatural habit by which the soul in the state of grace, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, judges rightly in particular events what ought to be done in view of its supernatural ultimate end.

The following should be noted in regard to this definition:

a) The gifts of the Holy Ghost are not transient motions or simple actual graces, but supernatural *habits* infused by God in the soul together with sanctifying grace.

b) The Holy Ghost actuates the gift of counsel as its only *motor cause*; but the soul in grace collaborates as *instrumental cause*, through the virtue of prudence, to produce a supernatural act, which will proceed, as regards the *substance of the act*, from the virtue of prudence, and as regards its *divine modality*, from the gift of counsel. This same

1. Cf. our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, 373-76.

mechanism acts in the other gifts. Because of this, their acts are performed promptly and as if *by instinct*, without needing the slow and laborious discursus of the reason (cf. Matt. 10:19-20).

c) Supernatural prudence correctly *judges* what has to be done at a given moment, guided by the light of reason illumined by faith. But the gift of counsel quickly *intuits* what has to be done by the instinct and motion of the Holy Ghost, that is, by entirely *divine* reasons, which are often unknown to the very soul that performs the act. For this reason, in the virtue of prudence the *way of action* is discursive, while in the gift it is intuitive, *divine* or superhuman.

Importance and Necessity

The intervention of the gift of counsel is indispensable for perfecting the virtue of prudence, above all, in certain sudden cases that are difficult to solve yet require an immediate judgment, since sin or heroism can be a matter of an instant. Such cases, which are less rare than is commonly believed, cannot be resolved by the slow and laborious work of the virtue of prudence reviewing its eight quasi-integral parts.² The intervention of the gift of counsel is necessary; it will provide the instantaneous solution as to what should be done by that kind of instinct or connaturality characteristic of the gifts.

It is very difficult at times to know how to equate suavity with firmness, how to reconcile the necessity of guarding a secret with the obligation to speak the truth, the interior life with the apostolate, affectionate love with perfect chastity, the wisdom of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove (cf. Matt. 10:16). For all these the lights of prudence at times are insufficient: the intervention of the gift of counsel is required.

Father Lallemand writes:

We may notice in several places of Scripture admirable instances of the gift of counsel; as in the silence of Our Lord before Herod,³ and in the answers he made to save the woman taken in adultery, and to confound those who demanded of him if it were lawful to pay tribute to Caesar; in the judgement

2. They are: memory of the past, understanding of the present, docility, sagacity, reasoning power, foresight, circumspection and precaution (cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 49, aa. 1-8).

3. As Isaias 11:2 states and St. Thomas explains, Our Lord Jesus Christ possessed the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the most perfect degree (cf. *Summa*, III, q. 7, aa. 5-6).

a) *Blessed are the meek*, because meekness removes the impediments to the exercise of piety;

b) *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice*, because the gift of piety perfects the works of the virtue of justice and all derived from it;

c) *Blessed are the merciful*, because piety is exercised in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.⁸

Goodness and benignity are the fruits of the Holy Ghost that should be attributed directly to the gift of piety, and the fruit of *meekness* should be attributed indirectly, inasmuch as it removes the impediments to the acts of piety.⁹

Opposed Vices

The vices opposed to the gift of piety can be grouped under the generic name of *impiety*, because, as it belongs to the gift of piety to offer to God with filial affection whatever pertains to Him as our Father, anything that in one form or another involves a deliberate infraction of this duty deserves to be called *impious*.

On the other hand, “piety as a gift consists in a certain superhuman benevolence toward all,” considering others as children of God and our brothers in Christ.¹⁰ In this sense St. Gregory the Great names *hardness of heart* as opposed to the gift of piety since it is born of a disorderly love of self.¹¹

Father Lallemand has written admirably on this *hardness of heart*:

The vice that is opposed to the gift of piety is *hardness of heart*, which springs out of an ill-regulated love of ourselves; for this love makes us naturally sensible only to our own interests, so that nothing affects us except in reference to ourselves. We behold the offences done against God without tears, and the miseries of our neighbor without compassion; we are unwilling to incommode ourselves to oblige others; we cannot put up with their faults; we inveigh against them on the slightest ground, and harbor in our hearts feelings of bitterness and resentment, hatred and antipathy, against them.

8. Cf. *Summa*, II-II, q. 121, a. 2.

9. Cf. loc. cit., ad 3.

10. St. Thomas, *In III Sent.*, d. 9, q. 1, a. 1, q. 1, ad 4.

11. *Moralia*, II, chap. 49; M.L. 75: 593. Cf. also St. Thomas, *Summa*, I-II, q. 68, a. 2, ad 3; a. 6, ad 2; II-II, q. 159, a. 2, ad 1.

On the other hand, the more charity or love of God a soul possesses, the more sensitive it is to the interests of God and those of its neighbor.

This hardness is worst in the great ones of the world, in rich misers and voluptuaries, and in those who never soften their hearts by exercises of piety and familiarity with spiritual things.

It is also often to be found amongst men of learning who do not join devotion to knowledge and who, to disguise this fault from themselves, call it strength of mind; but the truly learned have been the most pious, as St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard; and of the Society, Laynez, Suárez, Bellarmine, and Lessius.

A soul which cannot weep for its sins, at least with tears of the heart, is full either of impiety or of impurity, one or the other, as is generally the case with those whose heart is hardened.

It is a great misfortune when natural and acquired talents are more esteemed in religion than piety. You will sometimes see religious, and perhaps superiors, who will loudly declare that they attach much more value to a practical active mind than to all those petty devotions, which, they say, are all very well for women, but are unbecoming in a strong mind, meaning by strength of mind that hardness of heart which is so opposed to the spirit of piety. They ought to bear in mind that devotion is an act of religion, or a fruit of religion and of charity, and consequently that it is to be preferred to all the moral virtues, religion following immediately in order of dignity the theological virtues.

When a grave father, respectable both for his age and the offices he has filled in religion, declares in the presence of the younger brothers that he sets high value on great talents and situations of distinction, or prefers such as excel in ability and knowledge to such as are inferior therein, although they possess greater virtue and piety, grievous injury is done to these poor young people. It is to infuse a poison into their hearts, from the effects of which they will perhaps never recover. A single such word said in confidence to another is enough to destroy him.¹²

Means to Foster This Gift

In addition to the general means for disposing oneself for the activity of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, such as recollection, prayer, fidelity to grace, and so on, the following practices are more immediately related to the gift of piety:

a) *Cultivating the spirit of adopted children of God.* There are few truths that have been repeated as often in the Gospel as the truth that God is our Father. Our Lord repeats this truth fourteen times in the

12. *Spiritual Teaching*, pp. 154-156.

Sermon on the Mount alone. This doctrine concerning our adopted sonship is so predominant in the New Testament that some writers have seen it as the most basic and essential theme of Christianity. We could never insist enough on the necessity of cultivating in our soul the spirit of filial trust and abandonment in the arms of our most loving Father. God is our Creator and will be our Judge at the moment of death; but, before all else and above all else, He is always our *Father*. The gift of fear arouses in us a respectful reverence for God, but this is in no way incompatible with the tenderness and filial confidence inspired in us by the gift of piety.

Although a full awareness of one's condition as a child of God and the experience of infinite sweetness which flows from this realization can come to the soul only through the activity of this gift of piety, we can nevertheless do much to experience this sweetness if, with the help of grace, we dispose ourselves to remain always before God as children before their most loving father. We should constantly beg for the *spirit of adoption*, linking this petition to an exercise repeated many times a day—as Dom Marmion did at each *Gloria Patri* at the end of the psalms. Furthermore, we should endeavor to do all things for the love of God in order to please our heavenly Father.

b) *Cultivating the spirit of universal brotherhood toward all men.* This is, as we have seen, the principal secondary effect of the gift of piety. Even before it is practiced in all its plenitude by the actuation of the gift, we can prepare ourselves for it with help of ordinary grace. We should strive ever to increase the capacity of our love so that we may embrace the whole world with the arms of love. We are all sons of God and brothers of Christ. With what persuasive insistence St. Paul repeated this truth to the early Christians: "For you are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28). If we would do as much as we could to treat our fellow men as true brothers in God, we would undoubtedly attract to ourselves His merciful gaze, which is delighted in nothing so much as in seeing all of us intimately united in His Divine Son. Christ Himself desired that the world should know that we are His disciples by the love that we have for one another (cf. John 13:35).

c) *Considering all things, even purely material things, as pertaining to the house of the Father.* What a profoundly religious sense is discovered in all things by those souls that are ruled by the gift of piety! St. Francis of Assisi ardently embraced a tree because it was “his brother” in God. St. Paul of the Cross would become ecstatic over the little flowers in his garden because to him they spoke of the heavenly Father. Saint Theresa of Lisieux broke into tears of tenderness when she contemplated a hen gathering its chicks under its wings and remembered the evangelical image by which Christ wanted to show us the sentiments of His divine heart even toward ungrateful and rebellious children (cf. Matt. 23:37).

Although without attaining the exquisite delicacy of the spirit of piety as manifested in these great souls, how differently we could evaluate created things, even purely material things, if we would strive to discover, under the light of faith, the *religious* meaning hidden within them. All creation is truly the *house of the Father*, and all things in it belong to Him. With what delicacy would we act toward even purely material things! We would discover in them *something divine*, which would make us respect them as if they were sacred vessels. Such a Christian attitude, so holy and meritorious in the eyes of God, would distance us from sin, which is always some kind of sacrilege against God or the things of God! Our whole life would be elevated to a loftier plane, reaching sublime heights under the most loving gaze of our heavenly Father.

d) *Cultivating the spirit of complete abandonment to God.* We will not attain this spirit perfectly until the gift of piety is intensely actuated in us, but we should try to do what we can to cultivate total abandonment to God. To this end, we should be fully convinced that, since God is our Father, it is impossible that any evil could befall us unless He permits it. For that reason, we should strive to remain indifferent in regard to health or sickness, the shortness or the length of our life, peace or war, consolation or aridity in our spiritual life, and so on, constantly repeating our acts of surrender and abandonment to His most holy will. The *fiat*, the “yes,” the “whatever Thou dost desire, Lord” should be the basic attitude of the Christian toward his God, in a complete filial abandonment to His divine and paternal will, which can only desire for us the greatest good, even though at times it might appear to be an evil in the sight of our purely human and natural gaze.

of Solomon; in the enterprise of Judith to deliver the people of God from the army of Holofernes; in the conduct of Daniel to justify Susanna against the calumny of the two elders; in that of St. Paul when he set the Pharisees against the Sadducees and when he appealed from the tribunal of Festus to that of Caesar.⁴

Effects of the Gift of Counsel

When the gift of counsel operates in souls, it produces admirable effects, of which the principal ones are the following:

1) *It preserves one from the danger of a false conscience.* It is very easy to delude oneself in a matter as delicate as this, especially if one has a profound knowledge of moral theology. There is almost no small disorderly passion that cannot be justified in some way by invoking a moral principle perhaps very sound in itself but misapplied in a particular case. While more difficult for an unlearned person, an expert easily finds a way to justify the unjustifiable. St. Augustine was correct when he said that “what we want is good and what we like is holy.” Only the intervention of the gift of counsel—which, surpassing the lights of natural reason dimmed by whim or passion, dictates with unappealable force and assurance what has to be done—can preserve one from this very grave error of confusing darkness with light. In this sense, none need the gift of counsel more than scholars and theologians, who can so easily delude themselves, falsely placing their science at the service of their conveniences and whims.

2) *It provides, with unimaginable success and assurance, the solution to many difficult and unexpected situations and problems.* We have already noted that at times the lights of simple supernatural prudence do not suffice. There are occasions when it is necessary to resolve immediately very difficult situations that, in theory, could not be resolved except after several hours of study. The salvation of a soul might even depend upon the solution (as in the case of a priest administering the last rites to a dying person). In these difficult situations, souls that are habitually faithful to grace and obedient to the action of the Holy Ghost suddenly receive the inspiration of the gift of counsel, which

4. *Spiritual Teaching*, p. 151.

instantaneously provides the solution to the situation with a truly admirable assurance. This surprising phenomenon often occurred with the holy Curé of Ars. Despite his scant theological knowledge, in the confessional he would instantly solve, with admirable assurance and success, difficult moral cases that dumbfounded the most eminent theologians.

3) *It inspires superiors with the most apt means for governing others.* The influence of the gift of counsel always refers to concrete and particular cases, but it is not restricted to the purely private and personal sphere of our own actions; it extends also to the successful direction of others, especially in unexpected and difficult cases. How much prudence the *superior* needs to reconcile the filial affection he must inspire in his subjects with the energy and firmness he must show in demanding the fulfillment of the law; to join benignity with justice, to ensure that his subjects fulfill their duties *out of love*, without piling on precepts, orders and reprimands! And the *spiritual director*: How could he resolve with assurance and success those thousand small conflicts that disturb the poor souls under his care? How could he counsel them in what they should do in each case, decide in a matter of vocation when it seems doubtful, and guide each soul by its own path to God? One can hardly conceive of such success without the frequent and strong intervention of the gift of counsel.

There were saints who had this gift in the highest degree. St. Antoninus of Florence was so outstanding for the admirable inspiration of his advice that history has given him the name of *Antoninus Consiliorum*. St. Catherine of Siena was the right arm and best counselor of the Pope. St. Joan of Arc, without any study of the military art, made plans and directed operations that astonished the most experienced captains, who saw their own military prudence surpassed by that of an unschooled girl. And St. Theresa of the Child Jesus in the full flower of youth fulfilled the difficult and delicate task of mistress of novices, which requires so much maturity and experience.

4) *It increases one's docility and submission to legitimate superiors.* This is an admirable effect that at first sight may seem incompatible with the gift of counsel; yet it is one of its most natural and spontaneous consequences. The soul governed directly by the Holy Ghost would appear to have no need or obligation to consult with men about its affairs. Nevertheless, precisely the contrary occurs: No one is more docile

and submissive, no one has a stronger inclination to ask for the guidance of the legitimate representatives of God on earth (superiors, spiritual directors, and so on) than the soul subject to the action of the gift of counsel.

This is because the Holy Ghost moves it to this docility and submission. God has determined that men be guided and governed by men. In Sacred Scripture we have innumerable examples of this. St. Paul is struck from his horse by divine light, yet he is not told what he has to do apart from entering the city, where Ananias will tell him on behalf of God (cf. Acts 9:1-6). God acts in the same manner with all His saints: He inspires in them humility, submission and obedience to His legitimate representatives on earth. When His inspiration and the command of the superior or director conflict, He desires that they obey the latter. He told this explicitly to St. Teresa: "Whenever the Lord gave me some command in prayer and the confessor told me to do something different, the Lord Himself would speak to me again and tell me to obey him; and His Majesty would then change the confessor's mind so that He came back and ordered me to do the same thing."⁵ Even when some very unwise confessors ordered the Saint to mock the apparitions of Our Lord (which they considered diabolical), the Lord Himself told her to obey: "He told me not to worry about it and said I was quite right to obey, but He would see that my confessor learned the truth."⁶ The Saint learned the lesson so well that whenever Our Lord ordered her to do something, she would immediately consult her confessors about it, *without telling them that Our Lord had ordered it*, so as to not influence their decision. Only if their decision coincided with Our Lord's command would she inform them of the divine communication. If their decision differed from it, she would ask Our Lord to change the opinion of her confessors, but would obey them in the meantime.

This is one of the surest signs of good spirit and of the genuineness of communications believed to be from God. If a revelation or vision inspires rebellion or disobedience nothing more is needed to reject it as false or diabolical.

5. *The Life*, p. 168.

6. *Ibid.*, chap. 29, 6.

Corresponding Beatitude and Fruits

St. Augustine assigns to the gift of counsel the fifth beatitude: blessed are the merciful (Matt. 5:7). St. Thomas, however, admits this only in a *directive* sense, in so much as the gift of counsel pertains to things useful or convenient for salvation. And there is nothing more useful than mercy shown others; it is by it that we ourselves receive mercy. In an executive or *elicited* sense, however, mercy belongs to the gift of piety, as we have seen.

In as much as this gift is related to mercy, it is related in a sense to the fruits of *goodness and benignity*.

Opposed Vices

By default, the gift of counsel is opposed by *precipitation* in acting on one's own judgment when one should wait for the Holy Ghost, and by *rashness* in failing to be attentive to the lights of Faith and to divine inspiration because of excessive self-confidence. By excess, this gift is opposed by *procrastination*, because although mature reflection is necessary before action, once a decision is made following the lights of the Holy Ghost, one should act quickly, before circumstances change and the occasion is lost.⁸

Means to Foster This Gift

Apart from the general means for fostering the gifts (recollection, life of prayer, fidelity to grace, and the like), upon which we can never insist too much, the following greatly help us to dispose ourselves for the actuation of the gift of counsel when it becomes necessary:

a) *Cultivating a profound humility*, in order to recognize our own ignorance and to ask for guidance from on high. Humble and persevering prayer is irresistible in face of the mercy of God. We should invoke the Holy Ghost when we rise in the morning, to ask Him for His direction and counsel throughout the day; at the beginning of each action, with a simple and brief movement of the heart that will be at the same time an act of love; in difficult and dangerous moments, when more

8. Cf. *Spiritual Teaching*, pp. 151-152.

than ever we need the lights of heaven; before making an important decision or giving orientation to others, or the like.

b) *Accustoming ourselves to act always with reflection and without haste.* All human effort and diligence are often insufficient for acting with prudence, as we have already noted. However, God does not deny His grace to anyone who does his best. When it becomes necessary, the gift of counsel will unfailingly act to make up for our ignorance and inability; but we should not tempt God, expecting to receive by Divine means what we can provide by the means He has placed within our reach with the help of ordinary grace.

c) *Listening in silence to the voice of God.* If we emptied our minds and shut out the noise and tumult of the world, we would frequently hear the voice of God, which usually speaks to the heart in solitude (cf. Osee 2:14). The soul must flee the exterior tumult and completely relax the spirit in order to hear the lessons of eternal life that the Divine Master will explain to it, as He did to Mary of Bethany, who sat calm and quiet at His feet (cf. Luke 10:39).

Father Philipon writes:

The Christian should walk through this world with his gaze fixed on the sublime destiny awaiting him: the consummation of his life in the unity of the Trinity, in the company of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, with other men, his brothers, and with the angels, who are also called to dwell with us in the same City of God, all together forming a single divine family: the Church of the Incarnate Word, the total Christ.

Why doesn't all our moral activity spring forth in us from this supreme orientation of our existence toward the beatific vision of the Trinity? We drag along in an ambience of vanities, of mere earthly horizons. Yet the grace of God assists us to divinize our actions and make them worthy in their least details, superelevating them to the level of the intentions of Christ, where we should remain without weakening, conscious of our divine filiation.

Our life should unfold in all its instants under the breath of the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, without ever deviating toward evil, without ever delaying its impulse toward God. The Holy Ghost is not only very close to us, but inside us, in the depths of our souls, to illumine us with the light of God, to inspire us to entirely divine actions, and to facilitate their realization. The more a soul abandons itself to the Holy Ghost, the more it becomes divine. Perfect sanctity consists in refusing nothing to Love.⁹

9. *Los dones del Espíritu Santo* (Barcelona: 1966), p. 281.

d) *Practicing perfect docility and obedience to those whom God has placed in the Church to govern us.* Let us imitate the example of the saints. St. Teresa, as we have seen, obeyed her confessors even in preference to Our Lord Himself, and He praised her conduct. The docile, obedient and humble soul is in the best of conditions to receive enlightenment from on high. On the contrary, nothing removes us farther from the mysterious echo of the voice of God than the spirit of self-sufficiency and insubordination to His legitimate representatives on earth.

12

The Gift of Knowledge

THE fifth gift of the Holy Ghost in the ascending order of perfection is the gift of *knowledge*.¹

Some authors assign to the gift of knowledge the function of perfecting the virtue of *hope*, but St. Thomas assigns it to *faith*, while to hope he assigns the gift of fear, as we saw. We shall follow this criteria of the Angelic Doctor, because it seems to us to be based on the very nature of the gift of knowledge.²

Nature of the Gift of Knowledge

The gift of knowledge is a supernatural habit, infused by God with sanctifying grace, through which the human intellect, under the illuminating action of the Holy Ghost, judges rightly concerning created things as ordained to the supernatural end.

For a better understanding of the true nature of this admirable gift, let us explain the words of this synthetic definition.

It is a supernatural habit, infused by God with sanctifying grace: It is not a question of human or *philosophical knowledge*, which gives origin to a certain and evident knowledge of things deduced by natural reason from their principles or proximate causes, nor is it a question of *theological knowledge*, which deduces from revealed truths the virtualities contained therein by making use of natural reasoning. It is a question of a certain *supernatural knowledge* that proceeds from a special illumination of the Holy Ghost, Who reveals

1. Cf. our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 321-28.

2. Cf. *Summa*, II-II, qq. 9 and 19.

illumination of the Holy Ghost, and through a certain affinity or connaturality with spiritual things, we are able to judge rightly, according to the principles of faith, concerning the use of creatures, their value, their utility or danger as regards eternal life. Consequently, he who works under the influence of this gift can be said truly to have received the *knowledge of the saints*: “*Dedit illi scientiam sanctorum*” (Wis. 10:10).

Effects of the Gift of Knowledge

The effects produced in the soul by the action of the gift of knowledge are admirable and most varied, and all of them have a great sanctifying value. The following are the principal effects:

1) *It teaches us how to judge rightly concerning created things in relation to God.* This is proper to the gift of knowledge:

Under this impulsion, a twofold movement takes place in the soul: it understands the nothingness, the emptiness of the creature, and at the same time, in beholding creation, it sees the footprints of God. Thus, the gift of knowledge drew tears from St. Dominic at the thought of the lot of poor sinners and inspired St. Francis of Assisi to compose his famous *Canticle to the Sun* at the sight of the pageant of nature. We can trace both these currents in the well-known passage of the *Spiritual Canticle* of St. John of the Cross in which the Saint describes how the sight of created nature is at once a help and a torment to the soul of the mystic. The visible universe reveals the passage of the Beloved, but He, the Invisible, has gone by, and the soul must wait until, transformed into Him, it meets Him again in the Beatific Vision.⁷

The first aspect caused St. Ignatius of Loyola to exclaim, when contemplating the spectacle of a starry night: “Oh, how vile the earth appears to me when I contemplate heaven!”; the second aspect caused St. John of the Cross to fall to his knees before the beauty of a little fountain, of a mountain, of a landscape, of the setting sun, or on hearing “the whistling of the memorial airs.” The nothingness of created things, when contemplated through the gift of knowledge, made St. Paul esteem all things as *dung*, so that he might gain Christ (Phil. 3:8); the beauty of God reflected in the beauty and fragrance of the flowers

7. M. M. Philipon, O.P., *The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity*, pp. 174-175 (chap. 8, n. 6).

obliged St. Paul of the Cross to speak to them in transports of love: "Be silent, little flowers, be silent." And this same sentiment is what gave the *Poverello* of Assisi that sublime sense of the universal brotherhood of all things that come forth from the hand of God: brother sun, brother wolf, sister flower. . . . It was likewise the gift of knowledge that gave St. Teresa of Avila that extraordinary facility for explaining the things of God by making use of comparisons and examples taken from created things.

2) *It guides us with certitude concerning what we must believe or not believe.* The souls in whom the gift of knowledge operates intensely instinctively possess the *sense of faith (sensus fidei)*. Without having studied theology or without having had any education, they perceive immediately whether or not a devotion, a doctrine, a counsel or any kind of maxim is in accord with faith or is opposed to faith. Do not ask them for the reasons, because they know it without reasoning. *They experience it* with an irresistible power and with an unflinching assurance. It is admirable how St. Teresa of Avila, in spite of her humility and her complete submission to her confessors, could never accept the erroneous doctrine which held that in certain elevated states of prayer it was advisable to prescind from the consideration of the adorable humanity of Christ.⁸

3) *It enables us to see promptly and with certitude the state of our soul.* Everything is clear to the penetrating introspection of the gift of knowledge: "our interior acts, the secret movements of our heart, their qualities, their goodness, their malice, their principles, their motives, their ends and their intentions, their effects and their consequences, their merit and demerit."⁹ Rightly did St. Teresa say that "in a room bathed in sunlight not a cobweb can remain hidden."¹⁰

4) *It inspires us concerning the safest method of conduct with our neighbor as regards eternal life.* In this sense the gift of knowledge in

8. St. Teresa of Avila writes: "Although I have been contradicted about it and told that I do not understand it, because these are paths along which Our Lord leads us, and that, when we have got over the first stages, we shall do better to occupy ourselves with matters concerning the Godhead and to flee from corporeal things, *they will certainly not make me admit that this is a good way*" (*Interior Castle*, p. 304 [Sixth Mansions, chap. 7, n. 6]; cf. *The Life*, chap. 22, where she explains her thought at length).

9. Louis Lallemand, S.J., *Spiritual Teaching*, p. 140.

10. *The Life*, p. 112.

its practical aspect influences the virtue of prudence, whose perfection is directly under the gift of counsel, as we saw.

Once again, we call on Father Lallemand:

By this gift a preacher knows what he ought to say to his hearers, and what he ought to urge upon them. A director knows the state of the souls he has under his guidance, their spiritual needs, the remedies for their faults, the obstacles they put in the way of their perfection, the shortest and the surest road by which to conduct them safely; how he must console or mortify them, what God is working in them, and what they ought to do on their part in order to cooperate with God and fulfil His designs. A superior knows in what way he ought to govern his inferiors.

They who have the largest share of this gift are the most enlightened in all knowledge of this kind. Wonderful things are disclosed to them with respect to the practice of virtues. They discover therein degrees of perfection unknown to others. They perceive at a glance whether actions are inspired by God and conformable to His designs; let them deviate ever so little from the ways of God, they discern it at once. They remark imperfections where others cannot see them; they are not liable to be deceived in their opinions, neither are they apt to allow themselves to be surprised by illusions with which the whole world is filled. If a scrupulous soul applies to them, they know what to say to remove its scruples. If they have to make an exhortation, whether to monks or to nuns, thoughts will occur to them suited both to the spiritual needs of the religious themselves, and to the spirit of their order. If difficulties of conscience are proposed to them, they will give an admirable solution. Ask them for the reason of their reply, they cannot tell you, because they know it without reasoning, by a light superior to all reason.

By this gift it was that St. Vincent Ferrer preached with that wonderful success that we read of in his life. He abandoned himself to the Holy Spirit as well in preparing his sermons as in delivering them, and everybody went away deeply affected. It was easy to see that the Holy Spirit animated him, and spoke by his mouth. One day that he had to preach before a prince, he thought he must use more study and more human diligence in the preparation of his sermon. He applied himself thereto with extraordinary pains; but neither the prince nor the audience generally were as satisfied with this studied discourse as they were with that of the next day, which he composed in his ordinary way, according to the movement of the Spirit of God. His attention was called to the difference between the two sermons. "Yesterday," said he, "it was brother Vincent that preached; to-day it was the Holy Spirit."¹¹

5) *It detaches us from the things of earth.* This is, in reality, nothing more than a logical consequence of the *right judgment* of things that

11. *Spiritual Teaching*, pp. 141-142.

constitutes the proper characteristic of the gift of knowledge. "All things in heaven and earth are nothing in comparison with God."¹² For that reason it is necessary to rise above created things in order to rest in God alone. But only the gift of knowledge gives to the saints that profound vision concerning the necessity of the absolute detachment that we admire, for example, in St. John of the Cross. For a soul illuminated by the gift of knowledge, creation is an open book where it discovers without effort the *nothingness* of creatures and the *all* of the Creator. "The soul must fly [from creatures], must no longer know them; it must consider all things as dross in order to gain Christ. . . . Are all created things put together worth even a look from him who—though it be but once—has felt God?"¹³

The effect produced in St. Teresa by the jewels shown to her by her friend Doña Luisa de la Cerda in Toledo is of interest. Here is the Teresian text with all its inimitable elegance:

It happened on one occasion while I was staying with that lady whom I have mentioned, and I was troubled with my heart (as I have said, I have suffered with this a great deal, though less so of late), that, being an extremely kind person, she had some very valuable golden trinkets and stones brought out for me, and in particular a set of diamonds, supposed to be of great price, thinking that they would cheer me. *But I only laughed to myself, thinking what a pity it is that people esteem such things, remembering what the Lord has laid up for us and reflecting how impossible it would be for me to set any store by these things, even if I tried to make myself do so, unless the Lord were to allow me to forget those others.*

The soul that feels like this has great dominion over itself—so great that I do not know if it can be understood by anyone who does not possess it, for it is a real, natural detachment, achieved without labor of our own. *It is all effected by God*, for, when His Majesty reveals these truths, they are so deeply impressed upon our souls as to show us clearly that we could not in so short a time acquire them ourselves.¹⁴

6) *It teaches us how to use created things in a holy way.* This sentiment, which is complementary to the former, is another natural consequence of the *right judgment* of created things proper to the gift of

12. St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, bk. I, chap. 4, n. 3 (David Lewis transl. [London: Longman, 1864], v. 1, p. 14).

13. M. M. Philippon, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 175.

14. *The Life*, chap. 38, n. 4 (Peers transl., pp. 268-269). Emphasis ours.

knowledge. It is certain that the being of the creatures is nothing compared to the being of God, and yet all created things are crumbs that fall from the table of God, and they speak to us of Him and lead us to Him if we know how to use them rightly. This is what is effected by the gift of knowledge. There are countless examples of this in the lives of the saints. The contemplation of created things raised their souls to God because they could see the vestige or trace of God in creation. Sometimes the most insignificant detail, which would pass unnoticed by an ordinary person, made a strong impression on these holy souls and led them to God.

7) *It fills us with repentance and sorrow for our past errors.* This is an inevitable consequence of the right judgment concerning created things. In the resplendent light of the gift of knowledge, the souls discover the *nothingness* of creatures, their fragility, their vanity, their short duration, their inability to make us truly happy, the harm that attachment to them can cause to the soul. And then, on recalling other periods of life in which perhaps they were subject to such vanity and misery, holy souls feel deep within their hearts a most profound repentance that is manifested externally by intense acts of contrition and self-disdain. The pathetic accents of the *Miserere* spontaneously spring to their lips as a psychological necessity to alleviate the weight of sorrow that overwhelms them. For that reason, the beatitude that corresponds to the gift of knowledge is the beatitude of those who weep, as we shall see.

Such are the principal effects of the gift of knowledge. Thanks to it, far from seeing creatures as obstacles to union with God, the virtue of faith uses them as instruments to be united to God more easily. Perfected by the gifts of understanding and knowledge, the virtue of faith reaches a most lively intensity that gives the soul a premonition of the divine brilliance of the eternal vision.

Corresponding Beatitude and Fruits

To the gift of knowledge corresponds the third beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:5). This is true both as regards the merit and the reward. As regards the *merit* (tears), because the gift of knowledge, since it implies a right estimation of creatures in relation to eternal life, impels the just man to weep for his past errors and illusions

as regards the use of creatures. In regard to the *reward* (consolation), because through the light of the gift of knowledge created things are esteemed rightly and ordained to the divine good, and from this spiritual consolation follows, beginning in this life and reaching its plenitude in the life to come.¹⁵

As regards the fruits of the Holy Ghost, the special certitude concerning supernatural truths, called faith (*fides*), and a certain taste, delight and fruition in the will, called *spiritual joy* (*gaudium*), correspond to the gift of knowledge.

Opposed Vices

In the prologue to the question on the sins opposed to the gift of understanding, St. Thomas refers to *ignorance* as a vice opposed to the gift of knowledge.¹⁶ Let us see how this is.

The gift of knowledge is indispensable for avoiding or rejecting completely, as by a certain divine instinct, the multitude of errors that in the matter of faith and morals are constantly threatening us by reason of our ignorance and mental weakness. Not only among uneducated persons but even among professional theologians, in spite of the sincerity of their faith and efforts of their studies, there is rampant a multitude of opinions and differing views in dogma and moral, and necessarily they must all be false except one, because truth itself is one. Who, then, will give us a sound and certain criterion so that we shall not deviate from the truth in any of these complicated questions? In the *universal* and *objective* order there can be no problem, in virtue of the magisterium of the Church, which is an infallible criterion of truth. (He who strictly abides by this infallible magisterium never errs.) But in the *personal* and *subjective* order, constant and unfailing certitude surpasses human power, even in the case of the best of theologians. Only the Holy Ghost, by the gift of knowledge, can give us that certitude by means of a divine instinct. And so it is that many persons who are uneducated and unlettered have astounded the greatest theologians by the security and depth with which they penetrate the truths of faith and the facility and clarity with which they resolve, as if by instinct, the most intricate problems of moral theology. On the other hand, how many illusions have been suffered in the ways of the Lord by those who have not been illumined by the gift of knowledge! All

15. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 9, a. 4, ad 1.

16. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 15.

false mystics are so precisely because of ignorance, which is opposed to this gift of knowledge.

This ignorance may be culpable and may constitute a true vice. And it may be so because an individual occupies himself in vain or curious things, or in human sciences without the proper moderation, so that he is excessively absorbed by them and gives no time or study to the most important science of his own salvation and sanctification, or because of vain *presumption* by which he trusts too much in his own knowledge and thus places an obstacle to the judgments that he should form under the light of the Holy Ghost. This abuse of knowledge is the principal reason why there are many more mystics among simple and uneducated persons than among the wise and the intellectual according to the world. As long as souls do not renounce their voluntary blindness and intellectual pride, there is no likelihood that the gifts of the Holy Ghost will ever be actuated in their souls. Christ Himself warned us in the Gospel: "I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones" (Matt. 11:25). Consequently, the *ignorance* contrary to the gift of knowledge, which is found in those who are considered by the world to be very wise and intelligent, is indirectly voluntary and culpable and therefore constitutes a true vice against the gift of knowledge.¹⁷

Means to Foster This Gift

In addition to the common means for fostering the gifts of the Holy Ghost in general (recollection, fidelity to grace, prayer, and the like), we can point out certain special means that pertain particularly to the gift of knowledge.

a) *To consider the vanity of earthly things.* We can never attain, however much we try by means of our "puny reflections,"¹⁸ to the penetrating intuition of the gift of knowledge concerning the vanity of created things. And yet there is no doubt that we can achieve something by meditating seriously on this point by means of the discursive methods that are at our disposal. God does not ask us for more than we are able

17. Cf. I. Menéndez-Reigada, O.P., *Los dones del Espíritu Santo y la perfección cristiana*, chap. 9.

18. This forceful expression is of St. Teresa (*The Life*, chap. 15, n. 14).

to give Him at a given time, and he who does what he can will never be refused the divine assistance for further progress.¹⁹

b) *To accustom oneself to refer all created things to God.* This is another psychological method for attaining gradually to the point of view in which the gift of knowledge definitely places us. We should never rest in creatures but should pass through them to God. Are not created beauties a pallid reflection of the Divine beauty? We should endeavor to discover in all things the vestige or trace of God and thus prepare the way for the superhuman action of the Holy Ghost.

c) *To oppose energetically the spirit of the world.* The world has the sad privilege of seeing all things precisely contrary to what they really are from a supernatural point of view. The world is not concerned with anything but enjoying created things, putting all its happiness in them, and turning its back on God. For that reason there is no other attitude that is more contrary to the spirit of the gift of knowledge, which makes us disdain created things or use them only in relation to God or as a means to God. We should avoid worldly gatherings, where false maxims of life completely contrary to the spirit of God reign. We should renounce the spectacles and diversions that are saturated or greatly influenced by the poisonous atmosphere of the world. We should always be alert lest we are taken by surprise by the artful enemy, who is constantly striving to turn our gaze away from the great panoramas of the supernatural world.

d) *To see the hand of Providence in the government of the world and in all the events of our life, whether prosperous or adverse.* It costs a great deal to acquire this point of view, and it will never be acquired completely until the gift of knowledge operates in us as well as the gift of wisdom. Nevertheless, we must endeavor to do as much as we can in this respect. It is a dogma of faith that God cares for us with a loving providence. He is our Father, and He knows much better than we what things are good for us. He governs us with an infinite love, although many times we cannot discover the secret design in that which He disposes or permits to happen to us or to our family or to the world.

19. It would prove very helpful in this regard to read certain spiritual books that treat of this matter. The venerable Louis of Granada wrote admirable pages on this point in several of his works.

e) *To be preoccupied greatly with purity of heart.* This preoccupation will attract the blessing of God, and He will not neglect to give us the gifts that we need to attain perfect purity of heart, if we are faithful to His grace. There is a very close relationship between the custody of the heart and the exact fulfillment of all our obligations. “I have had understanding above ancients: because I have sought thy commandments” (Ps. 118:100).

The Gift of Understanding

THE gift of understanding—like that of knowledge, though in another aspect—perfects the theological virtue of faith. We will study it carefully.¹

Nature of the Gift of Understanding

The gift of understanding is a supernatural habit, infused by God with sanctifying grace, by which the human intellect, under the illuminating action of the Holy Ghost, is made apt for a penetrating intuition of revealed truths, and even of natural truths, so far as they are related to the supernatural end.

Let us examine this definition so as to know the intimate nature of this great gift.

It is a supernatural habit infused by God with sanctifying grace: This is common to all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. They are not transient actual graces but real *habits* infused in the potencies of the soul in the state of grace to second easily the motions of the Holy Ghost.

By which the human intellect: The gift of understanding resides in the *speculative intellect*, which it perfects (the intellect having been informed previously by the virtue of faith) in order to receive in a connatural way the motion of the Holy Ghost, Who puts the gift into operation.

Under the illuminating action of the Holy Ghost: Only the Holy Ghost can put the gifts into operation. Without His divine motion they remain idle, since man is absolutely incapable of actuating them, even with the assistance of grace. The gifts are *direct* and *immediate* instruments of the Holy Ghost, Who is, therefore, *motor* and *rule* of the acts proceeding from them. From this

1. Cf. our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 314-21.

follows the *divine modality* of the acts of the gifts (the only modality possible because of the intrinsic demand of the very nature of the gifts). All that man can do with the aid of grace is to *dispose himself* for the divine motion, removing obstacles, remaining faithful to grace, imploring humbly the sanctifying action of the gifts, and *seconding* freely and meritoriously the motion of the Holy Ghost when the gifts actually operate.

Is made apt for a penetrating intuition: The formal object of the gift of understanding is a penetrating intuition, and it points out the specific difference between the gift and the theological virtue of faith. The virtue of faith gives to the created intellect a knowledge of supernatural truths in an imperfect manner (*modo humano*), which is proper to, and characteristic of, the infused virtues when they act by themselves, as we have already seen; the gift of understanding makes the intellect apt for the profound and intuitive penetration (*modo superhumano*) of those same revealed truths.² Simply speaking, this is *infused contemplation*, of which the mystics (St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and others) speak and which consists in a simple and profound intuition of truth (*simplex intuitus veritatis*).³

The gift of understanding is distinguished in turn from the other intellectual gifts (wisdom, knowledge and counsel), inasmuch as its proper function is the *profound penetration* of the truths of faith by way of a simple apprehension (that is, without making any judgment concerning them). It pertains to the other intellectual gifts to make a right *judgment* concerning them. This *judgment*, so far as it relates to *divine things*, pertains to the gift of wisdom; so far as it relates to *created things*, to the gift of knowledge; and so far as it pertains to the *application* of these truths to *particular actions*, to the gift of counsel.⁴

Of the revealed truths, and even of the natural ones, so far as they are related to the supernatural end: The *material object* of the gift of understanding comprises this. It embraces everything that pertains to God, man and all creatures, as regards their origin and end, in such wise that its material object extends *primarily* to the truths of faith and *secondarily* to all other things that have some relation to the supernatural end.⁵

2. "The gift of understanding is about the first principles of that knowledge that is conferred by grace [revealed truths]; but otherwise than faith, because it belongs to faith to *assent* to them, while it belongs to the gift of understanding to *pierce* with the mind the things that are said" (St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 8, a. 6, ad 2). (Emphasis ours.)

3. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 180, a. 3, ad 1.

4. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 8, a. 6.

5. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 3.

Necessity of the Gift of Understanding

However much the virtue of faith is used in the human or discursive manner (*ascetic way*), it can never attain its full perfection and development; for this the influence of the gifts of understanding and knowledge (*mystical way*) is indispensable.

The reason is simple. Human knowledge is of itself discursive, by composition and division, by analysis and synthesis, not by the simple intuition of truth. The infused virtues are not exempt from this general condition of human knowledge, since they function under the rule of reason and in a *human (ascetic) mode*. But since the primary object of faith is God Himself, the first and supreme truth as it manifests itself (*veritas prima in dicendo*),⁶ which is most simple, the discursive complex mode of knowing it cannot be more inadequate and imperfect. Faith is of itself an *intuitive* and not a discursive habit;⁷ therefore, the truths of faith cannot be comprehended in all their perfection (though always in the chiaroscuro of mystery) except by the *intuitive* and *penetrating* vision that is obtained by the gift of understanding—in other words, when faith has been completely liberated from all the discursive elements and converted into a *contemplative* faith. Then one has reached the *pure faith* that is repeatedly recommended by St. John of the Cross as the only means proportionate for the union of our intellect with God.

By *pure faith* is meant the adherence of the intellect to revealed truth, an adherence that is based solely on the authority of God revealing. It excludes all discursus. From the moment that reason enters into play, pure faith disappears, because it is mixed with an element that is alien to its nature. Reasoning can precede or follow faith, but it cannot accompany it without denaturalizing it. The more there is of discursus, the less there is of adherence to the truth by the authority of God and, consequently, the less there is of pure faith.⁸

From this is evidently deduced the necessity of the *mystical* or infused *contemplation* (caused by the gift of understanding and the other intellectual gifts)

6. As first truth, God can be considered in a threefold manner: *in essendo*, *in cognoscendo* and *in dicendo*. He is called first truth *in essendo* when we refer to the Deity itself as distinct from false gods; *in cognoscendo* when we refer to the infinite wisdom of God, Who cannot be deceived; *in dicendo* when we refer to the supreme veracity of God, Who cannot deceive us.

7. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 2, a. 1; *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 1.

8. Father Crisógono de Jesús, *Compendio de ascética y mística*, II, chap. 2, a. 3.

for the attaining of *pure faith*—without discursus—of which St. John of the Cross speaks; and consequently, the necessity of *mysticism* for Christian perfection, *asceticism* being insufficient.⁹

Effects of the Gift of Understanding

The gift of understanding produces admirable effects in the soul, and all of them perfect the virtue of faith to the degree of incredible intensity and certainty that was attained in the saints. It reveals truths with such clarity that, without sounding the mystery entirely, it gives such an unshakable security concerning the truth of our faith that they could not conceive the existence of unbelieving or undecided persons in matters of faith. This is seen in the experimental order in *mystical* souls, in whom the gift of understanding has developed to an eminent degree. They would be disposed to believe the contrary of what they saw with their own eyes rather than to doubt in the slightest any of the truths of faith.

This gift is most useful for theologians, and St. Thomas Aquinas possessed it to an extraordinary degree. It enables the theologian to penetrate into the depths of the revealed truth and to *deduce later*, by means of theological discursus, the conclusions that are implicit in these truths. The Angelic Doctor himself points out six different ways in which the gift of understanding enables us to penetrate into the depths and mystery of the truths of faith.¹⁰

1) *It enables us to see the substance of things hidden under their accidental manifestations.* In virtue of this divine *instinct*, the mystics *perceive* the Divine reality that is hidden under the Eucharistic veils. From this follows their obsession with the Eucharist, an obsession that becomes in them a veritable martyrdom of hunger and thirst. In their visits to the tabernacle they do not pray or meditate, but merely contemplate the Divine Prisoner of Love with a simple and penetrating gaze that fills their souls with infinite peace and tenderness. "I look at Him and He looks at me," as the simple peasant possessed by the Holy Ghost told the Curé of Ars.

9. We have explained this at length in our *Theology of Christian Perfection* (pp. 126 ff.), to which we refer the reader who might want more information on this very important point.

10. Cf. *Summa*, II-II, q. 8, a. 1.

2) *It discloses the hidden meaning of Sacred Scripture.* This is what the Lord effected in regard to the disciples at Emmaus when "He opened their understanding so that they could understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:45). All the mystics have experienced this phenomenon. Without any discursus or study or any human assistance, the Holy Ghost suddenly disclosed to them with a most vivid intensity the profound meaning of some statement in Scripture that immersed them in a deluge of light. There, in this profound understanding of the passage, many of the saints found the theme of their whole spiritual life: "The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever" of St. Teresa (Ps. 88:1); "whosoever is a little one, let him come to me" of St. Theresa of Lisieux (Prov. 9:4); "the praise of glory" of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity (Eph. 1:6). For that reason, also, these great mystics are not at all moved by books written by men. They reach a point in which they find satisfaction only in the inspired words that come from Scripture, and especially in those that come from the lips of Christ Himself.¹¹

3) *It reveals to us the mysterious significance of symbols and figures.* Thus St. Paul saw Christ in the rock that gushed forth with living water to appease the thirst of the Israelites in the desert: "And the rock was Christ" (I Cor. 10:4). St. John of the Cross reveals to us, with a startling mystical intuition, the moral, analogical and parabolic meaning of many of the symbols and figures of the Old Testament that reached their full realization in the New Testament or in the life of grace.

4) *It reveals spiritual realities to us under sensible appearances.* The Liturgy of the Church is filled with sublime symbolism that for the most part escapes the notice of superficial souls. But the saints experience a great veneration and respect for the "smallest ceremony of the Church,"¹² which floods their soul with devotion and tenderness. The gift of understanding enables them to see the sublime realities that are hidden beneath those symbols and sensible signs.

5) *It enables us to contemplate the effects that are contained in causes.* As Father Philipon writes:

There is another aspect of the gift of understanding that is particularly noticeable in the case of contemplative theologians. After the hard work of human

11. "As for me, with the exception of the Gospels, I no longer find anything in books. The Gospels are enough" (*St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations*, May 15, p. 44).

12. St. Teresa, *The Life*, p. 226 (chap. 33, n. 5).

study, everything suddenly becomes luminous, under an impulse of the Spirit. A new world is seen in a principle or in a universal cause: Christ-the-Priest, the One Mediator between heaven and earth, or Mary the Virgin Co-Redemptrix, bearing spiritually in her womb all the members of the Mystical Body; or again the mystery of identification of God's innumerable attributes in His sovereign simplicity, and the conciliation of the Unity of Essence with the Trinity of Persons, in a Godhead infinitely surpassing the most probing research of all created intelligence. All are truths which the gift of understanding can penetrate effortlessly and fruitfully in the beatifying delight of "an eternal life begun on earth" in the very light of God.¹³

6) *It makes us see causes through their effects.*

Father Philipon continues:

Inversely, the gift of understanding reveals God and His almighty causality of effects, without working the long, discursive journeyings of human thought left to its own resources, but by a simple, comparative gaze and by intuition, "after the manner of God." In almost imperceptible signs and in the smallest events of its life, a soul that is attentive to the Holy Ghost suddenly discovers God's providential plan in its regard. Without dialectic reasoning upon causes, the simple sight of the effect of the justice or the mercy of God lets it perceive the whole mystery of Divine predestination, the "exceeding charity" (Eph. 2:4) which pursues souls in order to unite them to the beatifying Trinity. Through all, God leads to God" (loc. cit.).

Such are the principal effects that the actuation of the gift of understanding produces in the soul. One can see that, perfected by this gift, the virtue of faith reaches an astounding intensity. The veils of mystery are never parted in this life—"we see now through a glass in a dark manner" (I Cor. 13:12)—but its unfathomable depths are penetrated by the soul with an experience that is so clear and deep that it approaches the intuitive vision. St. Thomas, a model of serenity and reserve in all his statements, writes the following words: "In this very life, when the eye of the spirit is purified by the gift of understanding, one can in a certain way see God."¹⁴

On reaching these heights, the influence of faith is extended to all the movements of the soul, all its acts are illuminated, and it sees all things through

13. M. M. Philipon, O.P., *The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity*, p. 180-181 (chap. 8, n. 7).

14. Cf. *Summa*, I-II, q. 69, a. 2, ad 3.

the prism of faith. These souls seem to lose human instinct and to be guided entirely by the *divine instinct*. Their manner of being, of thinking, of speaking or reacting to the events of their own lives or to the lives of others is disconcerting to the world, which is incapable of understanding these souls. One could say that they suffer an intellectual strabismus in order to see all things just the opposite from the way in which the world sees them. But the truth of the matter is that the distorted vision is that of the world. These souls have had the blessed good fortune that the Holy Ghost, through the gift of understanding, has given to them the *sensus Christi*—“*nos autem sensum Christi habemus*” (I Cor. 2:16)—which makes them see all things in the light of faith. “The just man *liveth by faith*” (Rom. 1:17).

Corresponding Beatitude and Fruits

The sixth beatitude pertains to the gift of understanding: “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

In this beatitude, as in the others, two things are indicated: first, something by way of disposition and *merit* (purity of heart); secondly, something by way of *reward* (to see God). The gift of understanding is applicable to both. There are two kinds of *purity*: purity of *heart*, by which all sins and disorderly affections are rejected, which is effected by virtues and the gifts that pertain to the *appetitive* part; and purity of *mind*, by which all phantasms and errors against the faith are rejected, and this is proper to the gift of understanding. And as regards the *vision of God* there is also a double aspect: the *perfect* vision of God, by which one sees the very essence of God, and this is proper to heaven; and the *imperfect* vision of God, which is proper to the gift of understanding, by which, although we do not see what God is in Himself, we see what He is not and know Him the more perfectly in this life as we understand better that He exceeds everything that our human intellects could imagine.¹⁵

As regards the fruits of the Holy Ghost, which are exquisite acts of virtue proceeding from the gifts, the fruits that pertain to the gift of understanding are faith (or the certitude of faith) and—as last and most perfect fruit—joy (spiritual joy), which resides in the will.¹⁶

15. Cf. *ibid.*, II-II, q. 8, a. 7.

16. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 8.

Opposed Vices

St. Thomas dedicates an entire question to the study of these vices.¹⁷ They are mainly two: *spiritual blindness* and *dullness of the spiritual sense*. The first is the complete lack of vision (blindness); the second is a notable weakening of vision (myopia). Both of them proceed from carnal sins (lust and gluttony), and because of that there is nothing that is such an impediment to the flight of the intellect—even naturally speaking—as the vehement attachment to corporal things that are contrary to it. For that reason, lust, with its greater vehemence, produces *spiritual blindness*, which excludes almost completely the knowledge and appreciation of spiritual goods, and gluttony produces *dullness of the spiritual sense*, which weakens man as regards this knowledge and appreciation in a way similar to the blunting or dulling of a sharp and pointed object—a nail, for example—that should easily penetrate a wall.¹⁸

A contemporary author writes:

This blindness of mind is that which is suffered by all lukewarm souls; for they possess the gift of understanding, but their mind is engulfed with the things of this world. They are lacking in interior recollection and the spirit of prayer; they are constantly pouring themselves out through the channels of the senses, without any attentive or constant consideration of divine truths. Hence they never arrive at discovering the exalted clarity that is hidden in their obscurity. For that reason we see that very frequently they are easily deceived and mistaken when they speak of spiritual things, of the delicacy and fine points of divine love, of the first stages of the mystical life, of the heights of sanctity, and that sometimes they engage themselves in external works that are covered with the veil of human evaluations, and they consider as exaggerations or eccentricities the delicacies that the Holy Ghost asks of souls.

These are the souls who wish “to go by the *cowpath*,” as one says rustically. They are attached to the earth, and for that reason the Holy Ghost cannot raise them into the air with His divine motion and breathing. They are busy making sandpiles by which they think they can reach heaven. They suffer that spiritual blindness that prevents them from seeing the infinite holiness of God, the marvel that grace works in souls, the heroism of abnegation that He asks of souls to correspond to His immense love, the foolishness of love by which the soul is led to the folly of the Cross. Such lukewarm souls think nothing of venial sins and perceive only those sins that are more serious; as a result, they ignore what are commonly called imperfections. They are blind because they never take into their hands the torch that would give light in this dark space (II Pet. 1:19),

17. Cf. *ibid.*, q. 15.

18. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 3.

and many times in their presumption they attempt to guide others who are blind (Matt. 15:14).

He who suffers such a blindness or shortsightedness in his interior vision, which prevents him from penetrating the things of faith, cannot be free of fault because of his negligence and carelessness or because of the tedium that he experiences in regard to spiritual things, since he loves more those things that appeal to the senses.¹⁹

Means to Foster This Gift

As we have said repeatedly, the actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost depends entirely on the Divine Spirit Himself. However, the soul can do much by *disposing* itself, with the help of grace, for this divine actuation.²⁰ Following are the principal means of disposing oneself:

a) *To enliven faith with the help of ordinary grace.* The infused virtues are perfected by the increasingly intense practice of their proper acts. And although it is true that unless they go beyond the *human* (ascetic) mode of operation they can never reach their perfection, it is nevertheless an excellent disposition so that the Holy Ghost will perfect the virtues with His gifts if the soul does all that it can by the ascetic practices within its reach. It is a fact that God, according to His ordinary providence, gives His graces to those who are best disposed.²¹

b) *Perfect purity of soul and body.* As we have already seen, the sixth beatitude, which pertains to the clean of heart, corresponds to the gift of understanding. Only through perfect cleanness of soul and body is

19. I. Menéndez-Reigada, O.P., *Los dones del Espíritu Santo y la perfección cristiana*, pp. 593-94.

20. "Although this work is performed by the Lord, and we can do nothing to make His Majesty grant us this favor, we can do a great deal to *prepare ourselves* for it" (St. Teresa, *Interior Castle*, Fifth Mansions, chap. 2, n. 1 [emphasis ours]). The Saint is referring to the contemplative prayer of *union*, which is an effect of the gifts of understanding and wisdom.

21. St. Teresa of Avila speaks beautifully on this point in many ways. "Unless you have omitted to prepare yourselves for your work you need have no fear that it will be lost" (*The Way of Perfection*, chap. 18, n. 3). "Their disposition [exercise of virtues] is such that He will grant them any favor" (*Interior Castle*, Third Mansions, chap. 1, n. 5). "Oh, God help me! How true are these words and how well the soul understands them, for in this state it can actually see their truth for itself. And how well we should all understand them were it not for our own fault! . . . but because *we ourselves fail by not preparing ourselves* . . . we do not see ourselves in this mirror into which we are gazing," p. 337 (Seventh Mansions, chap. 2, n. 8 [emphasis ours]).

one made capable of *seeing God*: in this life, by the profound illumination of the gift of understanding in the obscurity of faith; in the next life, through the clear vision of glory. Impurity is incompatible with either one.

c) *Interior recollection*. The Holy Ghost is the friend of recollection and solitude. Only there does He speak in silence to souls. "I will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart" (Osee 2:14). The soul that is a friend of dissipation and worldliness will never perceive the word of God in its interior. It is necessary to empty oneself of all created things, to retire to the cell of one's own heart in order to live there with the Divine Guest until the soul gradually succeeds in always preserving the sense of God's presence even amidst the most absorbing occupations. When the soul has done all that it can to be recollected and detached from the world, the Holy Ghost will do the rest.

d) *Fidelity to grace*. The soul must be always attentive and careful not to deny the Holy Ghost any sacrifice that He may ask. "Oh, today if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. 94:8). Not only must the soul avoid every *voluntary* thought, however small, that would sadden the Holy Ghost—according to the mysterious expression of St. Paul: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30)—but it must positively second all His divine movements until it can say with Christ: "I do always the things that please him" (John 8:29). It does not matter if sometimes the sacrifices that He asks of us seem to be beyond our strength. With God's grace, all things are possible. "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). And there is always left to us the recourse of prayer, to ask the Lord in advance that which He wishes us to give to Him: "Grant what Thou dost command and command what Thou wilt."²² In any case, in order to avoid anxiety in the matter of *positive* fidelity to grace, we should always rely on the rule and counsel of a wise and experienced spiritual director.

e) *Invoking the Holy Ghost*. We cannot practice any of these methods without the help and *prevenient* grace of the Holy Ghost. For that reason we must invoke Him frequently and with the greatest possible fervor, remembering the promise of Jesus to send the Holy Ghost to us (John 14:16-17). The Sequence of Pentecost (*Veni, Sancte Spiritus*), the hymn of Tierce (*Veni, Creator Spiritus*), and the liturgical prayer for

22. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, bk. X, chap. 29.

the feast of Pentecost (*Deus, qui corda fidelium*) should be, after the Our Father and the Hail Mary, the favorite prayers of interior souls. We should repeat them often until we attain that *recta sapere* that the Holy Ghost can give us. And in imitation of the Apostles when they retired to the Cenacle to await the coming of the Paraclete, we should associate our supplications with those of the Immaculate Heart of Mary—“*et Maria matre Iesu*” (Acts 1:14)—the Virgin most faithful²³ and the heavenly spouse of the Holy Ghost.

23. The beautiful invocation of the litany of the Blessed Virgin, “Virgin most faithful, pray for us,” should be one of the favorite ejaculations of the souls that thirst for God. The Divine Spirit will be communicated to us in the measure of our fidelity to grace, and this fidelity must be obtained through Mary, the universal Mediatrix of all graces by will of God.

14

The Gift of Wisdom

THE gift that takes the virtue of charity to its ultimate perfection is *wisdom*. Since charity is the most perfect and excellent of all virtues, it is obvious that the gift of wisdom will be, in its turn, the most perfect and excellent of all the gifts. We are going to study it with the attention it deserves.¹

Nature of the Gift of Wisdom

The gift of wisdom is a supernatural habit, inseparable from charity, by which we judge rightly concerning God and divine things through their ultimate and highest causes under the special instinct of the Holy Ghost, Who makes us taste these things by a certain connaturality and sympathy.

We shall explain this definition in order to gain a clear idea of the true nature of this great gift.

It is a supernatural habit: Like all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, it is infused by God in the soul together with grace and the infused virtues.

Inseparable from charity: It is precisely the gift of wisdom that perfects charity by giving it the *divine modality* it lacks as long as charity is subject to the rule of human reason, even illumined by faith. By reason of its connection with charity, all the souls in the state of grace possess the gift of wisdom as a *habit*, and it is incompatible with mortal sin. The same is true of all the other gifts.

By which we judge rightly: In this, as in other things, it is distinguished from the gift of understanding. It is proper to the gift of understanding, as

1. Cf. our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 358-67.

we have mentioned, to have a penetrating and profound intuition of the truths of faith in the order of *simple apprehension*, without making any judgment concerning them. Such a judgment is made by the other intellectual gifts, but in different ways: concerning *divine things*, by the gift of wisdom; concerning *created things*, by the gift of knowledge; concerning the application to our *concrete actions*, by the gift of counsel.

So far as it presupposes a *judgment*, the gift of wisdom resides in the intellect as in its proper subject, but since it is a *judgment by a kind of con-naturalness with divine things*, it necessarily presupposes charity. Hence the gift of wisdom *causaliter* has its root in charity, which resides in the will. The consequence is that this is not a purely speculative wisdom but a *practical* wisdom. To be sure, it belongs to the gift of wisdom, in the first place, to contemplate the Divine, which is like the *vision of first principles*; but in the second place, it pertains to wisdom to direct human acts according to *divine* reasons. In virtue of this supreme direction of wisdom by divine reasons, the bitterness of human action becomes sweet and work becomes rest.²

Concerning God: Whereas other gifts perceive, judge or act on things distinct from God, the gift of wisdom is primarily concerned with God Himself, giving us a *savory and experimental knowledge* of Him that fills the soul with indescribable sweetness. By reason of this ineffable *experience of God*, the soul judges all things so far as they pertain to God, and does so in their highest and supreme reasons, that is, through *divine* reasons. As St. Thomas explains, he who knows and tastes the highest cause par excellence, which is God, is disposed to judge all things by their proper divine reason.³ We shall come back to this when we point out the *effects* that this gift produces in the soul.

And Divine Things: Though the gift of wisdom pertains properly to divine things, there is no reason why its judgment cannot also extend to created things and discover in them their *ultimate causes*, which connect them in some manner to God. This is like a vision from *eternity* that embraces all creation in one scrutinizing glance, relating all things to God. Even created things are contemplated by wisdom in a *divine* manner.

It is evident from this that the primary object (formal *quod* object) of the gift of wisdom embraces the formal *quod* object and the material object of faith, because faith looks primarily to God and secondarily to revealed truths. But it is differentiated from faith by reason of its formal *quod* object, since

2. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 45, a. 2; a. 3, ad 3.

3. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 1.

faith is limited to *believing*, while the gift of wisdom *experiences and tastes* that which faith believes.⁴

Through their ultimate and highest causes. This is proper to and characteristic of every true wisdom. Now there are several types of wisdom, and it is convenient to mention them here.

Wise, in general, is he who knows things by their ultimate and highest causes. Before reaching such heights, however, there are different degrees of knowledge, both in the natural and the supernatural orders. Thus:

a) He who contemplates a thing without knowing its causes has a *vulgar* or *superficial* knowledge (e.g., a peasant who contemplates an eclipse not knowing what causes it).

b) He who contemplates a thing knowing and pointing out its *proximate* or immediate causes has *scientific* knowledge (e.g., an astronomer viewing an eclipse).

c) He who can reduce his knowledge to the ultimate principles of the natural being possesses *philosophic wisdom*, that purely human wisdom that is called *metaphysics*.

d) He who, *guided by the light of faith, scrutinizes with his natural reason the revealed data in order to draw from them their intrinsic virtualities and to deduce new conclusions* possesses *theological wisdom*, the *highest type of natural wisdom* that is possible in this life, but based *radically* on the supernatural order.⁵

e) But he who, presupposing faith and sanctifying grace, judges divine things and human things through their ultimate and highest causes—that is, by their *divine reasons*—by a kind of *divine instinct*, possesses true *supernatural wisdom*, and this is the gift of wisdom. Beyond this, there is no higher type of wisdom in this life. It is surpassed only by the *beatific vision* and the *uncreated wisdom* of God.

4. In the Seventh Mansions, St. Teresa speaks of the sublime Trinitarian experience of the soul that has reached the heights of the mystical union with God, which is effected by the very intense actuation of the gift of wisdom. She writes: "Oh, God help me! What a difference there is between hearing and believing these words and being led *in this way* to realize how true they are! (*Interior Castle*, p. 332. Emphasis ours.)

5. The habit of theology is *entitatively natural* because it proceeds from the natural discursus of reason after an examination of the data of faith, extracting its intrinsic virtualities or theological conclusions. But *radically* it can be called *supernatural* in the sense that it departs from the principles of faith and receives the illuminating influence of faith throughout the whole theological discursus (cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3).

From this it is evident that the knowledge which the gift of wisdom gives to the soul is incomparably superior to all human sciences, even theology, which already possesses something of divine. For that reason, a simple and uneducated soul who lacks the theological knowledge acquired by study may sometimes possess, through the gift of wisdom, a profound knowledge of divine things that causes amazement even to eminent theologians. Such was the case of St. Teresa and many other souls who had no scientific studies whatsoever.

Under the special instinct of the Holy Ghost: This is characteristic of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but it attains its highest perfection in the gift of wisdom, by reason of the loftiness of its object, which is God Himself and divine things. Man does not proceed laboriously and by means of rational discursus when he acts under the influence of the gifts, but in a rapid and *intuitive* manner by a special instinct that proceeds from the Holy Ghost. It is useless to ask the experimental mystics why they act in this or that way, or say this or that thing, because even they themselves do not always know. They have *experienced* something with great clarity and a certitude that far surpasses all human discursus or reason.

Who makes us taste these things by a certain connaturality and sympathy: This is another note that is typical of the gifts of the Holy Ghost which reaches its highest perfection in that of wisdom. Of itself, wisdom is a *savory* and *experimental* knowledge of God and of divine things. Here the word *wisdom* means both knowledge and taste. The souls that experience it understand very well the meaning of the words of the psalm: "*taste and see how good the Lord is*" (Ps. 33:9). They experience a divine delight that sometimes causes them to enter into ecstasy and brings to them something of the ineffable joy of eternal beatitude.

Necessity of the Gift of Wisdom

The gift of wisdom is absolutely necessary if the virtue of charity is to develop to its full perfection and plenitude. Precisely because charity is the most excellent of all the virtues and the most perfect and divine, it demands by its very nature the divine regulation of the divine wisdom. Left to itself, or to the control of man in the ascetical state, it would have to be regulated by *human* reason according to the *human mode*. But this *human* atmosphere asphyxiates it, preventing it from flying to the heights. Charity is a *divine* virtue and has wings for soaring to heaven, but it is obliged to move along

the earth because it is under the control of human reason and because, in a certain sense, it is necessary to compromise in accordance with *prudence*, due to its weak condition. Only when it begins to receive the full influence of the gift of wisdom is there given to charity the *divine* atmosphere and *modality* that it needs as the most perfect of all the theological virtues. Then charity begins to breathe and to expand in its proper element. As an inevitable consequence, it begins to grow and to increase rapidly, carrying the soul with it as if in flight, soaring to regions of the *mystical life* and to the very summit of perfection, which it never could have done if it had remained under the control of human reason in the purely ascetical state.

From this sublime doctrine follow two inevitable conclusions. The first is that the *mystical state*—the habitual or predominant regime of the gifts—is not something abnormal and extraordinary in the full development of the Christian life, but it is the *normal atmosphere* which grace, as a *divine* form, demands, so that it can develop in all its virtualities through the *operative principles* of the infused virtues, and especially through the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity), which are substantially *divine*. Therefore, the mystical state ought to be something *normal* in the Christian life, and it is, as a matter of fact, normal in every perfect Christian.

The second conclusion is that an actuation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the *human mode*, besides being impossible and absurd, would be utterly useless for the perfection of the infused virtues, and especially the theological virtues. The latter are superior by their nature to the gifts themselves,⁶ so the only perfection that they could receive from the gifts is the *divine mode*, which is exclusive and proper to the gifts, and never the *human mode*, which is already possessed by the theological virtues left to themselves in the ascetical state, that is, submitted to the human regulation of the soul imperfectly illuminated by the dark light of faith.

6. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, I-II, q. 68, a. 8. The theological virtues have as *direct and immediate object God Himself* (believed, hoped for or loved), while the gifts fall directly upon the infused virtues (something very distinct from God) to perfect them. Therefore it is evident that the theological virtues are, *by their own nature*, superior to the gifts themselves. On the other hand, the latter are superior to all infused virtues—including the theological ones—by their *divine modality* (as direct and immediate instruments of the Holy Ghost, and not of the soul in grace, like the virtues). More briefly, the theological virtues are superior to the gifts *by their theological nature*, while the gifts are superior to them by their *divine modality*.

Effects of the Gift of Wisdom

By reason of its elevation and grandeur and by reason of the sublimity of the virtue that it perfects, the effects which wisdom produces in the soul are truly remarkable. The following are the more characteristic effects of this gift.

1) *It gives to the saints a divine sense, a sense of eternity, by which they judge all things.* This is the most impressive of all the effects of the gift of wisdom so far as they are manifested externally. One would say that the saints have completely lost the *human instinct* or the human manner of judgment and that it has been replaced by a certain *divine instinct* by which they judge all things. They see everything from God's point of view, whether the little, commonplace episodes of daily life, or the great international events. In all things they see the hand of God. They never attach their attention to immediate secondary causes but pass them by, to arrive immediately at the Supreme Cause, Who governs and rules them from above.

The saints would have to do a great violence to themselves in order to descend to the point of view that judges from a purely human and rational standard. An insult or any other injury that is done to them causes them to turn immediately to God, Who is the one who wishes or permits that they be exercised in patience and thus increase their glory. They do not dwell for an instant on the secondary cause, which is the evil or malice of men, but they rise immediately to God and judge all things from the divine heights. They do not consider something (whether sickness, persecution, death, or the like) *disgraceful* in the way that the men of the world do, but they consider as disgraceful only that which God would consider such, namely, sin, lukewarmness, infidelity to grace, and so on. Like St. Teresa of Avila, they do not understand how the world can consider as *treasures* those little baubles that sparkle and glitter, because they see clearly that there is no treasure but God and the things that lead to God. As St. Aloysius Gonzaga used to say: "Of what avail is this to me for eternity, for the glory of God?" This is the Saints' only differential criteria for judging the value of things.

The gift of wisdom shone most brilliantly in St. Thomas Aquinas, among many other saints. He possessed a remarkable supernatural instinct in discovering in all things the *divine* aspect by which they were related to God. There is no other way of explaining his divine instinct

and insight except that the gift of wisdom operated in him in an eminent degree.⁷

In modern times, an admirable example of the operation of the gift of wisdom is Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity. According to Father Philipon, who studied her case profoundly, the gift of wisdom was the outstanding characteristic of the doctrine and life of this saintly Carmelite nun of Dijon.⁸ She was perfectly aware of her sublime vocation and even succeeded in contemplating the Trinity, so that she experienced the distinct Persons of the Trinity present in her soul. The greatest trials and sufferings were unable to disturb for a moment her ineffable peace of soul. No matter what misfortunes befell her, she remained as unmoved and tranquil as if her soul were already in eternity.

2) *It makes the saints live the mysteries of faith in an entirely divine manner.* As Father Philipon says:

The gift of wisdom is the royal gift; by it souls enter most closely into participation of the deiform mode of divine knowledge. Short of the beatific vision, which is the fullest measure of this gift, it is impossible to rise any higher. It is the gaze of the "Word breathing forth love" communicated to the soul, which judges of everything in the light of the highest and most divine causes, and judges them also for the highest reasons "after the manner of God."

The divinized soul that has been introduced by charity into the intimacy of the Divine Persons and, as it were, into the heart of the Trinity is so moved by the Spirit of Love that it contemplates all things from this center, this indivisible point from which they appear to it as they do to God Himself. Thus does it view the divine attributes, creation, redemption, glory, the hypostatic order, the smallest happenings in the world. So far as it is possible to mere creatures, it tends to see from the same angle of vision as that from which God sees Himself and the whole universe. It is the deiform manner of contemplation in the light of the experience of the Deity that fills the soul with ineffable sweetness: *per quamdam experientiam dulcedinis* (*Summa*, I-II, q. 112, a. 5).

To understand this, we must understand that God can only see things in Himself: in His causality. It is not directly in themselves that He knows His creatures, or in the movement of contingent and temporal causes which govern their activity. He beholds them eternally in His Son. He judges of every event of Providence in the light of His Essence and His Glory.⁹

7. Cf. Antoine Gardeil, O.P., *The Gifts of the Holy Ghost in the Dominican Saints* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1937), chap. 8.

8. Cf. M. M. Philipon, *The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity*, chap. 8, n. 8.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

The soul that becomes a participant in this divine mode of knowledge by means of the gift of wisdom penetrates into the unsounded depths of the Divinity, and it contemplates all things *through the divine*. One would say that St. Paul was thinking of such souls when he wrote: "The Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:10).

3) *It makes them live in union with the three Divine Persons through an ineffable participation in Their Trinitarian life.* We look again to Father Philipon:

While the gift of knowledge acts by an ascending movement, raising the soul from creatures to God, and the gift of understanding penetrates all God's mysteries from without and within by a simple loving gaze, the gift of wisdom may be said never to leave the very heart of the Trinity. It looks at everything from that indivisible center. Thus deiform, the soul can see things only from their highest and most divine motives. The whole movement of the universe, down to its tiniest atoms, thus lies beneath its gaze in the all-pure light of the Trinity and of the divine attributes, and it beholds them in order, according to the rhythm with which these things proceed from God. Creation, redemption, hypostatic order—it sees all, even evil, ordained to the greater glory of the Trinity. Finally, it looks aloft, rising above justice, mercy, prudence and all the divine attributes. Then it suddenly discovers all these uncreated perfections in their eternal Source: in the Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Ghost which infinitely surpasses all our narrow human concepts and leaves God incomprehensible and ineffable even to the gaze of the blessed, and even to the beatified gaze of Christ. It beholds that God, Who is supereminent in His simplicity, is simultaneously Unity in Trinity, indivisible Essence and fellowship of three living Persons, really distinct according to an order of procession that does not affect their consubstantial Equality. Human eye could never have discovered such a mystery, nor could human ear have caught such harmonies, and the human heart could never have suspected such beatitude had not the Godhead stooped to us by grace in Christ, in order that we might enter into the unfathomable depths of God under the guidance of His own Spirit.¹⁰

The soul that has reached these heights never departs from God. If the duties of one's state should so demand, it gives itself externally to all types of work, even the most absorbing work, with an unbelievable activity; but in the most profound center of the soul, as St. John of the Cross used to say, it experiences and perceives the divine company of the Three, and does not abandon Them for an instant. In such souls

10. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

Martha and Mary have been joined in an ineffable manner, so that the prodigious activity of Martha in no way compromises the peace and tranquility of Mary, who remains day and night in silent contemplation at the feet of the Divine Master. For such a soul, life on earth is the beginning of eternal beatitude.

4) *It raises the virtue of charity to heroism.* This is precisely the purpose of the gift of wisdom. Freed from human bondage and receiving in full the divine atmosphere that the gift gives, the fire of charity reaches tremendous proportions. It is incredible what the love of God can do in souls that are under the operations of the gift of wisdom. Its most impressive effect is the complete and total death of *self*. Such souls love God with a pure love only for His infinite goodness and without the mixture of any human motive or self-interest. True, they do not renounce their hope of heaven; they desire it more than ever, but they desire it primarily because there they shall be able to love God with even greater intensity and without any interruption. If it were possible to glorify God more in hell than in heaven, they would without hesitation prefer the eternal torments.¹¹ It is the definitive triumph of grace and the total death of one's own self. Then one begins to fulfill the first commandment of the law of God in all the fullness that is compatible with the state of misery and weakness on earth.

As regards one's neighbor, charity also reaches a sublime perfection through the gift of wisdom. Accustomed to seeing God in all things, even in the most minute details of daily life, the saints see Him in a very special manner in their neighbor. They love their neighbor with a profound tenderness that is completely supernatural and divine. They serve their neighbor with heroic abnegation, which is at the same time filled with naturalness and simplicity. Seeing Christ in the poor, in those who suffer, in the heart of all their brothers, they hasten to aid their

11. This sentiment has been experienced by many saints. We mention only St. Theresa of Lisieux, who expresses it with such simple yet sublime delicacy: "One evening, not knowing in what words to tell Jesus how much I loved Him, and how much I wished that He might be everywhere honored and served, the sad thought forced itself upon my mind that from the depths of hell there would never go up to Him one single act of love. From my inmost heart I then cried out that *I would gladly be cast into that place of torment and blasphemy to make Him eternally loved even there.* Of course this could not be for His glory, since He desires only our happiness, but love must needs speak foolishly" (*Autobiography*, chap. 5).

brethren with a soul that is filled with love. They are happy to deprive themselves of even the necessities of life in order to give them to their neighbor, whose interest they place and prefer before their own, as they would put the interests of Christ before their own. Personal egoism in relation to neighbor is completely dead. Sometimes the love of charity that inflames their heart is so great that it is manifested externally in the divine madness which is so disconcerting to human prudence. St. Francis of Assisi embraced a tree as a creature of God, desiring to embrace all creation because it came from the hands of God.

5) *It gives to all the virtues their ultimate perfection.* This is an inevitable consequence of the previous effect. Perfected by the gift of wisdom, charity extends the divine influence to all the other virtues, because charity is the true—though extrinsic and accidental—*form* of all the other virtues, as St. Thomas teaches. The whole pattern and organism of the Christian life experiences the divine influence of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the perfect plenitude that is seen in the virtues of the saints and is sought in vain in souls which are less advanced. By reason of the influence of the gift of wisdom through charity, all the Christian virtues are cultivated, and they acquire a godlike modality that admits of countless shades and manifestations, according to the personal character and particular type of life of the saints. But in any case they are all so sublime that one could not say which of them is most exquisite. Having died definitively to self, being perfect in every type of virtue, the soul has arrived at the summit of the mount of sanctity, where it reads that sublime inscription written by St. John of the Cross: “Here on this mountain dwell only the honor and glory of God.”

Corresponding Beatitudes and Fruits

Following the teaching of St. Augustine, St. Thomas states that the seventh beatitude corresponds to the gift of wisdom: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9). He proves the fittingness of this application from two points of view: as regards the reward and as regards the merit. As regards the merit (“blessed are the peacemakers”), because peace is nothing other than the tranquility of order, and to establish order (in relation to God, ourselves and neighbor) pertains precisely to wisdom. As regards the reward (“they shall be called the children of God”), because we are adopted children of God by reason of our

participation and likeness with His only-begotten Son, Who is Eternal Wisdom.¹²

As regards the fruits of the Holy Ghost, the following three pertain especially to the gift of wisdom: *charity*, *spiritual joy* and *peace*.¹³

Opposed Vices

To the gift of wisdom is opposed the vice of *spiritual dullness* or stupidity.¹⁴ It consists in a certain defect of judgment and lack of spiritual sense, which prevents one from discerning or judging the things of God through that connaturality by taste or contact with God that comes from the gift of wisdom. Worse yet is the vice of *fatuity*, which prevents a person from judging in any way of divine things. Dullness is opposed to the gift of wisdom by privation; fatuity is opposed to it by negation.¹⁵

We suffer from this stupidity whenever we somehow esteem the nothingness of this world or think that there is value in anything which is not the possession of the supreme good or what leads to it. Hence, if we are not saints, we must admit that we are really stupid, however painful this might be to self love.¹⁶

When this stupidity or dullness is voluntary because a man is submerged in earthly things to the point that he has lost sight or has become incapable of contemplating the divine, it is a true sin, according to the teaching of St. Paul, who says that the animal man does not comprehend the things of the Spirit of God (cf. I Cor. 2:14). And since there is nothing that so brutalizes and animalizes man, until submerging him entirely in the mud of earth, as the vice of *lust*, it is primarily from lust that spiritual dullness proceeds, although the vice of *anger* also contributes to it so far as its violent movements impede right judgment.¹⁷

Means to Foster This Gift

Apart from the general means such as recollection, a life of prayer, fidelity to grace, deep humility, frequent invocation of the Holy Ghost, and so on,

12. Cf. *Summa*, II-II, q. 45, a. 6.

13. Cf. *ibid.*, I-II, q. 70, a. 3; II-II, q. 28, aa. 1 and 4; q. 29, a. 4, ad 1.

14. Cf. *ibid.*, II-II, q. 46.

15. Cf. *ibid.*, a. 1.

16. I. Menéndez-Reigada, *Los dones del Espíritu Santo y la perfección cristiana*, p. 595.

17. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa*, II-II, q. 46, a. 3.

we can dispose ourselves for the actuation of the gift of wisdom by using the following means, which are perfectly within our reach with the help of ordinary grace:

a) *To make an effort to see all things from God's point of view.* How many pious souls, even among those who are consecrated to God, fall into the habit of judging things from a purely natural and human point of view—when not a totally worldly point of view! Their spiritual myopia is such that they never elevate their gaze above the purely human causes to see God's designs in everything that happens. If they are annoyed by others—even inadvertently—they get mad and feel offended. If a superior corrects them, right away they consider him demanding, tyrannical and cruel. If he orders them to do something that is not to their liking, they complain of his “lack of understanding,” his “unawareness of reality,” his “incapacity to govern.” If he humiliates them, they raise a terrible fuss. They have to be treated with the caution one would have toward a worldly person entirely lacking supernatural spirit. It is not surprising that the world is in such a bad state when those who should give the good example are often this way!

The gift of wisdom will never act in such souls. Such an imperfect and *human* spirit completely suffocates the habit of the gifts. Unless they make some effort to elevate their gaze to heaven and, prescinding from *the secondary causes*, see the hand of God in all the events of their life—whether prosperous or not—their poor and painful spiritual life will always remain on the ground. To learn how to fly it is necessary to keep flapping toward the heights, whatever the cost and sacrifice.

b) *To combat the wisdom of the world, which is nothingness in the eyes of God.* It is St. Paul who terms it so (I Cor. 3:19). The world considers as wise those who are fools in God's eyes (I Cor. 1:25), and by an unavoidable antithesis, the wise in the eyes of God are fools according to the world (I Cor. 1:27, 3:18). And since the world is full of stupidity and foolishness, Sacred Scripture says that “the number of fools is infinite” (Eccles. 1:15).

Father Lallemand writes:

In fact, the generality of mankind have a depraved taste, and they may justly be called fools, because they act like fools, placing their last end, at least practically, in the creature and not in God. Each has some object to which he is

attached, and to which he refers everything, entertaining neither affection nor passion except in connection with it; and this is to be a fool indeed.

Would we know if we are of the number of wise men or fools, let us examine our tastes and distastes, either with respect to God and divine things, or with respect to creatures and the things of earth. Whence spring our satisfaction and our dissatisfactions? Wherein does our heart find its repose and its contentment?

This sort of examination is an excellent means of acquiring purity of heart. We ought to familiarize ourselves with the practice, examining our likings and dislikings frequently during the day, and trying little by little to refer them to God.

There are three sorts of wisdom condemned in Scripture, which are so many veritable follies. *Terrena*, earthly wisdom, when a man has no taste but for riches; *animalis*, sensual wisdom, when he has no taste but for bodily pleasures; *diabolica*, devilish wisdom, when he has no taste but for his own superiority.

There is a folly that is true wisdom before God. To love poverty, contempt, crosses, persecutions; this is to be a fool according to the world's esteem. And yet the wisdom which is a gift of the Holy Ghost is nothing else but this same folly which has a taste only for what Our Lord and the saints delighted in. Now Jesus Christ, in everything that He touched during His mortal life, as poverty, abjection, the cross, left a sweet odour, a delicious savor; but few souls have their senses sufficiently purified to perceive this odour and to taste this savour, which are altogether supernatural. The saints have *run to the odour of these ointments* (Cant. 1:3), like St. Ignatius, who took delight in seeing himself made a mock of; St. Francis, who so passionately loved abjection, that he performed actions for the purpose of making himself ridiculous; St. Dominic, who was more gratified at Carcassonne, where he was generally insulted, than at Toulouse, where he was honored by all the world.¹⁸

c) *Not to be attached to things of this world, however good and useful.* Science, art, human culture, material progress of the nations, and so on, are good and useful in themselves if they are directed and ordered righteously. However, if we dedicate ourselves to them with *too much eagerness and ardor*, they will not fail to seriously harm us. Once our taste is used to the savor of creatures, it will experience a certain dullness toward savoring the things of God, so superior in every way. A multitude of souls are paralyzed in their spiritual life because they allow themselves to be absorbed in the disorderly appetite of science, even sacred or theological science. They lose the taste for the interior life, they abandon or shorten prayer, they absorb themselves in intellectual work and neglect the "only necessary thing," of which Our Lord

18. *Spiritual Teaching*, pp. 132-133 (IV, chap. 4, a. 1).

speaks in the Gospel (Luke 10:42). What a shame this is and how they will regret it in the next life, when it will be too late!

Father Lallemand continues:

How unlike are the judgements of God to the judgements of men! Divine wisdom is a folly in the judgement of men, and human wisdom is folly in the judgement of God. It is for us to see to which of these two judgements we will conform our own. One or the other we must take as the rule of our actions.

If we have a taste for praises and honors, so far we are fools; and the more relish we have for being esteemed and honored, the more foolish we are. As, on the contrary, the more love we have for humiliation and the cross, the wiser we are.

It is monstrous that even in religion there should be found persons who have no taste for anything but what makes them of importance in the eyes of the world; who do all their actions, for the twenty or thirty years of their religious life, only that they may attain some end which they have in view; who scarcely feel either joy or sadness except with reference thereto, or at least are more affected by that than by anything else. As for all that regards God and perfection, it is insipid to them; they feel no relish for it.

This is a fearful state, and worthy of being deplored with tears of blood. For of what perfection are such religious capable? And what fruit can they gather from their labors among others? But what confusion will be theirs at the hour of death, when it shall be disclosed to them that, during the whole course of their life, they have neither sought nor relished anything but show and vanity, like people of the world. Let such persons be ever so melancholy, only utter a word that gives them a hope of some advancement, however false it may be, and you will instantly see a change come over their countenance, and their heart expand with joy as at the news of some great success.

For the rest, as they have no taste for devotion, they treat its practices as follies, the amusement of weak minds, and not only guide their conduct by these erroneous principles of an earthly and devilish wisdom, but communicate their sentiments also to others, teaching them maxims altogether contrary to those of Our Lord and the Gospel, the rigor of which they try to soften by forced interpretations that fall in with the inclinations of corrupt nature; supporting themselves by other passages of Scripture ill understood, on which they build their own ruin.¹⁹

d) *Not to be attached to spiritual consolations, but pass from them to God.* God wants us only for Himself to such an extent that He desires our complete detachment even from the spiritual consolations which He at times so abundantly provides in prayer. Such consolations are

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

certainly extremely important for our spiritual advancement,²⁰ but only as an incentive and encouragement to seek God with a greater ardor. To desire them so as to dwell on them and enjoy them as the *ultimate end* of our prayer would be evil and immoral; and even considering them as an *intermediate end*, subordinated to God, would be a great imperfection, of which we would have to purify ourselves if desirous of attaining perfect union with God.²¹ We have to be ready and willing to serve God in darkness as in light, in dryness as in consolation, in aridity as in spiritual delight. We have to seek directly the God of consolations, not the consolations of God. Consolations are like the sauce or seasoning which makes it easier to eat the strong food that really nourishes the body; the seasoning by itself does not nourish the body and can even harm the palate, making the palate insensitive to useful foods prepared without it. This is evil and has to be avoided at all costs if we want the gift of wisdom to begin acting intensively in us.

20. J. G. Arintero, O.P., *Cuestiones místicas* (Madrid: B.A.C., 1956), 1, a. 6.

21. Cf. St. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night of the Soul*, passim.

Fidelity to the Holy Ghost

WE have seen in the preceding chapters how the Holy Ghost, with the Father and the Son, is the sweet Guest of our soul: *dulcis hospes animae*. We have also seen how He acts constantly in us, either moving the habit of the infused virtues the *human way* in the beginnings of the spiritual life (ascetic stage) or that of the gifts the *divine way* until the faithful soul is taken to the heights of Christian perfection (mystical stage).

But we cannot think that the Holy Ghost does not demand anything of the soul in return for His divine liberality and generosity. He demands of it a continuous *fidelity* to His divine motions, under the penalty of suspending or decreasing His action, leaving the soul at a standstill in the middle of the way, in great danger even of its very eternal salvation.

Because of this, we believe that our poor study, meant to make known the Person and the action of the Divine Spirit in our souls, would be very incomplete—besides its many other failings and imperfections—if we did not conclude it with a special chapter entirely dedicated to the exquisite fidelity with which the soul must incessantly correspond to the sanctifying action of the Holy Ghost, Who wants to take it, in a constant ascending progression, to the most elevated peaks of intimate union with God.

We shall study the nature of the fidelity to the Holy Ghost, its importance and necessity, its sanctifying efficacy and the concrete way to practice it.¹

1. Cf. our *Theology of Christian Perfection*, pp. 508-14; L. Lallemand, S.J., *Spiritual Teaching*, IV, chapters 1 and 2; Raoul Plus, S.J., *La fidelidad a la gracia* (Barcelona: 1951), and *Cristo en nosotros* (Barcelona: 1943), 1, 5.

Nature of the Fidelity to the Holy Ghost

Fidelity in general is the loyalty, the perfect adhesion, the exact observance of the faith that one owes to another. In the feudal law, it was the obligation the vassal had to present himself to his lord and render homage to him, thereafter remaining entirely subject to him, obeying him in everything without ever opposing him in the least.

All of this can be applied in the highest degree to the practice of fidelity to the Holy Ghost, which is nothing other than the *loyalty or docility in following His inspirations in any form in which they are manifested to us*.

St. Francis de Sales says:

By *inspirations* we mean all those interior attractions, motions, acts of self-reproach and remorse, lights and conceptions that God works in us, predisposing our hearts by His blessings (Ps. 20:4), fatherly care, and love in order to awaken, stimulate, urge, and attract us to holy virtues, heavenly love, and good resolutions, in short, to everything that sends us on our way to our everlasting welfare.²

Divine inspirations are produced in various ways. Even sinners receive them in order to be converted, but for the just soul, in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, it is perfectly *connatural* to receive inspirations at any moment. The Holy Ghost uses them to enlighten our minds *so that we can see what we ought to do*, and to move our will *so that we shall be able and shall desire to do it*, as St. Paul says: "For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will" (Phil. 2:13).

It is evident that the Holy Ghost works in us according to His will. He inspires and works in the soul of the just person when He wants and as He wants: "The Spirit breatheth where he will" (John 3:8). Sometimes He merely *enlightens* us, as when He gives us the knowledge by which we may resolve a doubt; at other times He only *moves* us, as when we perform some good action that we had already intended to do; again at other times, and this is most frequent, He both *enlightens and moves* us at the same time.

At times He inspires us in the midst of some work or even distraction, sometimes during prayer, at the times of Communion, or in moments of recollection and fervor. He rules and governs the adopted sons of God in the ordinary events of daily life as well as in affairs of great importance. St. Anthony of

2. *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Pt. II, chap. 18.

the Desert entered a church and heard the preacher repeat the words of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor, . . . and come follow me" (Matt. 19:21). He immediately went home, sold everything he had and withdrew to the desert.

The Holy Ghost does not always inspire us directly. Sometimes He sends the inspirations through our guardian angel, a preacher, a good book or a friend. Nevertheless, in the last analysis the Holy Ghost is always the principal author of the inspiration.

Importance and Necessity

It would be impossible to insist too strongly on the importance and necessity of fidelity to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost in order to advance on the way of perfection. It is, in a certain sense, the *fundamental problem* of the Christian life, because it determines whether one will make constant progress toward the heights of sanctity or will remain paralyzed and motionless. It could be said that practically the *only worry* of the soul should be the attaining of a most exquisite and constant fidelity to grace. Without this, all other methods are doomed to failure. The profoundly theological reason for this can be found in the divine economy of *actual grace*, which maintains a strict relationship with the degree of the soul's fidelity.

Indeed, as we have said before, the previous motion of actual grace is absolutely necessary for every salutary act. It is in the supernatural order what the *previous divine motion* is in the purely natural order: something absolutely indispensable so that a being in potency may pass into act. Without actual grace it is as impossible to perform even the smallest supernatural action—even if the soul possesses sanctifying grace, the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost—as it is to breathe without air in the natural order. Actual grace is like *divine air* that the Holy Ghost sends to our souls so that they may breathe and live on the supernatural level.

Now, as Father Garrigou-Lagrange says:

Actual grace is constantly offered to us for the accomplishment of the duty of the present moment, just as air comes constantly into our lungs to permit us to breathe. As we must *inhale* in order to draw into our lungs the air which renews our blood, so we must will to *receive with docility the grace* that renews our spiritual energies in the journey toward God. A person who does not inhale will die of asphyxiation; he who does not receive grace with docility will eventually die of spiritual asphyxiation. This is why St. Paul says: "And we helping

do exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain" (II Cor. 6:1). We must correspond with it and cooperate generously with it. Were this elementary truth put into practice daily, it would lead to sanctity.³

But this is not all. In the ordinary economy of Divine Providence, God subordinates consequent graces to those graces that have previously been given. In other words, infidelity to grace at a given time will be sufficient to deprive us of many other graces that God would have given to us if we had used the earlier gifts of grace. Only in eternity shall we see that a great number of—indeed all—frustrated saints were such because of a series of infidelities to actual grace. It should be noted that we are not here speaking of serious sins but of those venial sins that, being fully deliberate, frustrated the action of the Holy Ghost by putting obstacles in the way of further progress toward perfection.

Father Garrigou-Lagrange continues:

The first grace of light, which efficaciously produces a good thought in us, is *sufficient* in relation to a voluntary good consent, in this sense, that it gives us, not this act, but the power to produce it. However, if we resist this good thought, we deprive ourselves of the actual grace which would have *efficaciously* led us to a good consent. Resistance falls on sufficient grace like hail on a tree in bloom which promised much fruit; the flowers are destroyed and the fruit will not form. *Efficacious* grace is offered us in *sufficient* grace, as the fruit is in the flower; moreover, the flower must not be destroyed if the fruit is to be given to us. If we do not resist *sufficient* grace, actual *efficacious* grace is given us, and by it we advance surely in the way of salvation. Sufficient grace thus leaves us without excuse before God, and efficacious grace does not allow us to glory in ourselves; with it we advance humbly and generously.⁴

Fidelity to grace, that is, to the divine motions of the Holy Ghost, is therefore not only of a great importance but absolutely indispensable for progress in the ways of union with God. The soul and its spiritual director should have no other obsession but that of attaining a constant, loving and exquisite fidelity to grace. Father Plus writes:

In fact, cannot the history of our lives often be reduced to the history of our perpetual infidelities? God has magnificent plans for us, but we constantly oblige Him to modify them. A grace that He was disposed to grant us is withheld

3. *The Three Ages of the Interior Life* (St. Louis: Herder, 1948), p. 94 (pt. 1, ch. 3, a. 5). Emphasis ours.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95. Emphasis ours.

because we have been careless in meriting it. And thus correction is added to correction. What remains of the initial project?

God lives in Himself, in advance, eternally, that which He wants us to live in time. His idea of us, His eternal will for us, is our *ideal history*: the great *possible* poem of our life. Our loving Father unceasingly inspires this beautiful poem in our conscience. Each imperceptible vibration is a gift, a talent that I should receive, an impulse that I should follow, a start that I should finish and turn to account. And Thou knowest, O Father, the resistance, the incomprehension, the perversion! At each resistance or incomprehension, Thy providence substitutes with another poem (a diminished but still magnificent poem) the preceding and all the other poems whose inspiration I failed to follow.

There are souls that do not attain sanctity because one day, at a given moment, they failed to correspond fully to a divine grace. At times, our future depends on two or three *yesses* or two or three *noes* which should have been said and were not, and on which depended numberless generousities or weaknesses.

What heights would we reach if we resolved to walk always at the pace of the divine magnificence! Our cowardice prefers dwarfish steps.

Who knows to what mediocrities—and maybe even worse things—we condemned ourselves because we did not respond attentively to the calls from on high? We have heard the striking words of Jesus Christ to St. Margaret Mary on the danger of not being faithful, and these, which are no less urgent: “Be very careful never to allow this lamp [her heart] to extinguish, because if it goes out you will not have fire to light it again.”

Have no false fear, but neither vain presumption. We should not play with God’s grace. It passes, and while it is true that many times it returns, it does not always return. If it returns, and supposing that it comes with as much strength as the first time, it finds the heart already weakened by the first cowardice, and consequently less armed to correspond. And with that God feels less inclined to give us another grace. What for? For it to be received as the preceding one? That wasted grace, that despised inspiration, that unqualifiable “depositing,” is a dangerous witness in God’s tribunal. . . . The saints trembled at the idea of the evil caused by infidelity to divine inspirations.⁵

Sanctifying Efficacy

The sacraments, when worthily received, are the fountain and source of grace, and their sanctifying efficacy, under equal conditions, is far superior to that of any other religious practice. However, of the religious practices that depend on man’s activity, the foremost is undoubtedly the *perfect fidelity* to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Regarding this, Monsignor Saudreau writes:⁶

5. *Cristo en nosotros*, pp. 169-70.

6. *El ideal del alma ferviente* (Barcelona: 1926), p. 108.

How could this divine grace fail to produce admirable things in his docile heart? God, infinitely good and holy, wishes more than anything to communicate His riches, to make His children participants of His sanctity and of His happiness. His paternal gaze is constantly turned to them, awaiting their good will and, as it were, begging their consent to load them with riches. His wisdom knows very well by what ways He will take them to make them saintly and happy. What guarantee, then, is that of those who let themselves be guided always and in everything by such a wise and loving guide? In them, the surge of His graces is always increasing; in the beginning they were like an intermittent sprinkle; then, like a creek; later, like a current; finally, like a deep and main river. And as the graces become more abundant, they grow in purity and intensity.

It is most profitable to seriously make the test for a time of not refusing the Holy Ghost anything that we know He is clearly asking of us. An ancient author affirms positively that three months of perfect fidelity to all the inspirations of the Holy Ghost place the soul in a state that will surely lead it to the peak of perfection. And he adds: "Let anyone do, for three months, the test of refusing absolutely nothing to God and he will see what a profound change will come about in his life."⁷

And Father Lallemand writes:

Our perfection depends wholly on this fidelity, and we may say that the sum of the spiritual life consists in observing the ways and the movements of the Spirit of God in our soul, and in fortifying our will in the resolution of following them, employing for this purpose all the exercises of prayer, spiritual reading, the sacraments, the practice of virtues and good works. . . .

The end to which we ought to aspire, after having for a long time exercised ourselves in purity of heart, is to be so possessed and governed by the Holy Spirit that he alone shall direct all our powers and all our senses, and regulate all our movements, interior and exterior, while we, on our part, make a complete surrender of ourselves, by a spiritual renunciation of our own will and our own satisfaction. We shall thus no longer live in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ, by a faithful correspondence with the operations of his divine Spirit, and by a perfect subjection of all our rebellious inclinations to the power of his grace. . . .

The reason why we are so slow in arriving at perfection, or never arrive at it at all, is, that in almost everything we are led by nature and human views. We follow but little, if at all, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to whom it belongs to enlighten, direct, and animate. . . .

We may say with truth that there are but very few who persevere constantly in the ways of God. Many wander from them perpetually; the Holy Spirit calls them back by his inspirations; but as they are intractable, full of themselves, attached to their own opinions, puffed up with their own wisdom, they do not

7. Cf. Mahieu, *Probatio caritatis* (Brujas: 1948), p. 271.

readily let themselves be guided. They enter but seldom into the way of God's designs, and make no stay therein, returning to their own inventions and ideas, which deceive and delude them. Thus they make but little progress, and are surprised by death, having taken but twenty steps where they might have taken ten thousand, had they abandoned themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁸

Way of Practicing It

The inspiration of the Holy Ghost is to an act of virtue what temptation is to a sinful act. Man descends to sin by three steps: temptation, delectation, consent. The Holy Ghost proposes the virtuous act to the intellect and arouses the will; the just man accepts and approves the inspiration and then carries it out.

As regards our perfect fidelity to grace, three things are necessary: 1) *attention* to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost; 2) *discretion* for distinguishing them from natural inclinations or movements from the devil; and 3) *docility* in carrying out the inspirations. We shall now explain each of these qualities in detail.

1) *Attention to the inspirations.* We should consider frequently that the Holy Ghost dwells within us (I Cor. 6:19). If we were able to detach ourselves completely from all earthly things and withdraw to the silence and recollection of our own interior, we would undoubtedly hear His voice speaking within us. This is not a question of an extraordinary grace; it would be something completely normal and ordinary in a Christian life that is lived seriously. Why then do we not hear His voice? For three main reasons.

a) *Because of our habitual dissipation:* God is inside and we live outside. "The inward man is quickly recollected, for he never pours himself out" (Kempis, 2:1). The Holy Ghost Himself expressly reminds us of this: "I will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart" (Osee 2:14). Father Plus insists on these ideas in a magnificent text:

God is discreet, but not because of timidity or lack of power. He could impose Himself; if He does not do so, it is rather due to goodness and the desire to give our initiative a larger field of action.

8. *Spiritual Teaching*, pp. 113, 116-117 (Fourth Principle, chap. 2, aa. 1 and 2).

But one should not imagine that the Lord is not a great lord; He cannot fail to have a very lively sentiment of His supreme dignity.

Let us suppose that the place He wants to enter or work in is filled with nothing but the turmoil of insane worries, the racket of rattles, agitation, whirlwinds, savage colts, the frenzy of speed, incessant moving and the inconsiderate search for trifles. Why seek a hearing?

God does not communicate in the midst of noise. When He finds the interior of a soul obstructed with a thousand things, He is in no hurry to give Himself, to remain amidst those thousand trifles. He has His own self-respect. He dislikes lowering Himself to the level of trinkets. Nevertheless, at times He takes charge; seeing the lack of attention, He demands attention; He was not welcome, but He has entered and speaks. But He usually does not proceed in this way. His presence is obviously not wanted, so He avoids being present. If the soul is in the state of grace, He, of course, dwells in it, but He does not manifest Himself to it. Since the soul does not deign to notice Him, He remains unnoticed; since there are substitutes that are preferred to Him, the Supreme Good avoids making Himself preferred in spite of all. The more the soul diffuses itself in things, the less He insists.

If, on the contrary, He notices that someone rids himself of those trifles and looks for silence, He draws near, filled with enthusiasm. He may manifest Himself because He knows the soul will hear Him. He will not always manifest Himself, nor will a patent showing of Himself be the most common occurrence, but undoubtedly the soul will feel invited, in an obscure way, to ascend. . . .

The soul aspiring to fidelity must live recollected for another reason: The Holy Ghost blows not only where He *wants* but *when* He wants. Interior callings, emphasizes St. Ignatius, characteristically manifest themselves to the soul without warning and almost without letting themselves be heard. An invitation may come at any time, so it is necessary to be attentive at all times, certainly not with anxiety, but intelligently and in perfect harmony with the wise activity of a soul completely dedicated to its duty.

Unfortunately, "the majority of people live at the window," as Froissard used to say. Worried only about the hubbub, about the comings and goings on the street, they give not a single look to Him Who, in silence and very frequently in vain, waits in the interior of the room to begin a conversation.⁹

The same author adds:

How to attain recollection in practice?

In the first place, it is necessary to choose a definite place for a determined time of prayer: Prayer only becomes spontaneous, habitual, constant, by the exercise of determined, prescribed prayer in a time and at an hour established

9. *La fidelidad a la gracia* (Barcelona: 1951), pp. 59 ff. This precious little work ranks among the best written on this important subject.

beforehand. Each must consult his particular grace, the circumstances in which his duties place him and the counsel of his spiritual director.

Once the exercises of prayer are determined, it is necessary to practice habitual recollection, in a certain exterior silence, of action or word and, above all, in interior silence.

A few simple principles summarize everything:

Speak only when the word is better than silence.

Avoid the agitation, the natural hurry. The quickest way to do things when in a rush is not to hurry. A great surgeon used to say when he was about to perform an urgent operation: "Gentlemen, let us go slowly; we cannot lose a moment." Who does not remember the reproaches that Monsignor Dupanloup used to make to himself in every retreat: "I am terribly busy. . . . I shall always take more time than necessary to do something"? At the close of his life, he said: "I have not lost enough time, I have done too many things, *too many small things at the expense of great things.*" And he frequently repeated: "Let us never abandon the interior life; always the interior life before everything else." Did not he dream for a while to retire to the Great Chartreuse? (loc. cit.).

b) *Because of our lack of mortification*: We are still too carnal and do not appreciate or enjoy but what is exterior and pleasing to the senses. As St. Paul says, "the sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:14). *The spirit of mortification* is absolutely indispensable. We must practice the famous *agere contra* that St. Ignatius of Loyola emphasized so much.

c) *Because of our disordered affection*: "Unless a man is unshackled from every creature, he will not have freedom to attend to the things of God. So it is that you may find few contemplatives, for few have skill to sever all bonds with the perishing creature" (Kempis, 3:31). Two things must be practiced if we are to hear God's voice: *detachment* from every earthly affection, and the *sincere attending* of the Divine Guest of our soul. The soul must always maintain an attitude of humble expectation: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (I Kings 3:10).

2) *Discernment of Spirits*. The discernment or *discretion of spirits* is of great importance in the spiritual life if one is to know the spirit that moves him at a given moment. The following are some of the most important criteria for recognizing divine inspirations and distinguishing them from the movements of our own nature or of the devil:

a) *The sanctity of the object*: The devil never inspires one to virtue and neither does human nature, as a rule, if it is a question of some virtuous act that is difficult.

b) *Conformity with one's state in life*: The Holy Ghost does not inspire a Carthusian monk to preach, nor a contemplative nun to take care of the sick in hospitals.

c) *Peace and tranquility of soul*: St. Francis de Sales maintains:

One of the best marks of the goodness of all inspirations and especially of the extraordinary is peace and tranquility of heart in those who receive them, since the Holy Spirit is indeed violent but with a violence that is gentle, mild and peaceful. He comes "like a *violent wind*" (Acts 2:2) and like thunder from heaven, but he does not overthrow them nor does he trouble them [the Apostles]. The fear seizing them at His sound is momentary and is immediately followed by a sweet assurance.¹⁰

The devil, on the contrary, excites and fills with uneasiness.

d) *Humble obedience*. "In obedience everything is safe; apart from obedience all is subject to suspicion. . . . A man who says that he is inspired and then refuses to obey his superiors and follow their advice is an impostor."¹¹ Proof of this is the great number of heretics and apostates who claimed to be inspired by the Holy Ghost or to enjoy a special charisma.

e) *The judgment of the spiritual director*. In the ordinary events of the everyday life it is not necessary to deliberate at length. As a rule, it suffices to choose that particular action which seems to be in conformity with the Divine will and not to be troubled by any scruples of conscience. In cases of doubt concerning matters of great importance, however, the Holy Ghost always inclines one to consult one's superiors or spiritual director.

3. *Docility in practice*. This is a quality by which one follows the inspiration of grace *immediately*, without making the Holy Ghost wait even an instant.¹² He knows better than we what is convenient for us;

10. *Treatise on the Love of God*, bk. 8, chap. 12.

11. *Ibid.*, bk. 6, ch. 13.

12. It is understood that this applies only to the cases in which the divine inspiration is altogether clear and manifest. In doubtful cases one should reflect, applying the rules of discernment or consulting a spiritual director.

let us accept then what He inspires and let us put it into practice with a happy and brave heart. The soul should always be disposed to fulfill God's will at every moment: "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God" (Ps. 142:10).

Nature, not conforming to this, will place a threefold obstacle in our way:¹³

a) *The temptation of delay*: It is like saying to the Holy Ghost, "Excuse me for today; I will do it tomorrow."

Since God is usually infinitely discreet in His petitions—for such is the suavity of His ways—we come to forget how odious it is to make His sovereign Majesty wait. Would we not immediately fulfill an order of the Vicar of Christ on earth? Yet we are negligent because it is God Himself Who is ordering us? His delicacy when soliciting our fidelity should be responded to with a delicacy that makes us fly to serve Him. Thus did the saints.

Many souls reach the end of their life without ever—or almost ever—having consented that the Holy Ghost be their absolute lord. They always prevented Him from entering, they always made Him wait. At the hour of death they will see this altogether clearly, but it will be too late: there will be no time for the "tomorrow without fail," for the constant delay. Time is over; one is entering eternity. We should often think of the lamentations of that last hour which are caused by our not having responded immediately to the inspirations of grace, by our having kept waiting for too long Him Who so wished to elevate us.

b) *The thefts of the will*: At times we confess our cowardice. We fear the sacrifice asked of us. This is the fear we all feel when it is a question of immolating ourselves (all immolation entails the death of something in us; it is always a "capital punishment"). Nature protests, lamenting beforehand the generousities to which it will have to consent.

Rivière used to exclaim:

My God! Take from me the temptation of sanctity. Content Thyself with the pure and patient life that I will heartily strive to offer Thee. Do not deprive me of the delightful pleasures that I have known, that I have so loved, and that

13. Cf. R. Plus, S.J., *La fidelidad a la gracia*, p. 90 ff., whose doctrine we summarize.

I wish so much to enjoy again. Do not get things wrong. I do not belong to the precise class. Do not tempt me with impossible things.¹⁴

This is a vivid description of the fear of total surrender in an uncommon soul, with its inclination to beat around the bush and its understandable eagerness to avoid the obstacle instead of overcoming it.

If we only suspected the reward for total and generous surrender! Tagore's story of the Indian beggar is well known; it is the story of many lives. Says the beggar:

I was walking to a town, begging from door to door on the way, when your golden carriage appeared in the distance like a radiant dream, and I admired the king of kings.

The carriage stopped. You gazed at me and alighted smiling. I felt as if fortune had entered my life. Suddenly you extended your right hand to me and asked: "What are you going to give me?"

Ah! What kind of joke was this? A king extending his hand to beg from a beggar? I was confused and perplexed. Finally, I took a grain of wheat from my sack and gave it to you.

What a great surprise it was when at the end of the day I emptied my bag and found a minute *nugget of gold* in the handful of common grain. Then I cried bitterly and told myself: "What a shame it is that I did not have the impulse to give you everything!"

c) *The eagerness of recovering what we have given:* If, at least, having given the miserly grain of wheat or the meager provisions of our sacks, we did not try to recover them! It is the old story of the children who, having offered their sweets at the Crib, try to recover them to "taste their sacrifice" as soon as we turn our back.

When the doges of Venice took office they used to throw a gold ring into the sea to symbolize the wedding of the republic with the ocean. However, it is said that as soon as the celebrations were over, divers made sure the ring was recovered.

This is the way we are. Who, without much searching, does not find similar examples in his moral conduct? Are we not used to subtracting from our holocausts, too eagerly expecting an immediate reward for the offering of our best sacrifices? The eternal misery of our condition!

14. *A la trace de Dieu*, p. 279.

We must humble ourselves for it, but not be discouraged, and do everything we can so that our selfishness is as small as possible.

Making Reparation for Our Infidelities

With the exception of the supreme misfortune of eternal condemnation, there is no greater unhappiness than the abuse of divine graces. However, whereas the eternal misfortune absolutely cannot be repaired, the infidelities to grace can be repaired either in part or in total while we are still in this world.¹⁵ In a prayer used in some religious communities is to be found this threefold petition to the Divine Mercy:

O my God, have toward me the mercy and liberality of enabling me to repair before I die all the losses of grace that I have had the misfortune or foolishness of bringing upon myself.

Enable me to reach the height of merit and perfection to which in Thy first intention Thou didst desire to lead me, which intention I have hitherto frustrated by my infidelities.

Deign also to repair in souls those losses of grace they have incurred through my fault.¹⁶

These petitions are most reasonable. God may increase the graces intended for a soul if this is asked of Him; and if the soul is faithful in these new divine advances, this increase may compensate for the preceding losses. The Lord can send other adversities to the person who did not avail himself of a prior adversity: the adversities he would have had if he had always been loyal, and the adversities destined to replace those that did not bear fruit. He can also multiply the occasions of sacrifice to replace the sacrifices that were refused. The graces of light can become more abundant, the will can receive more strength, and God can communicate a firmer, more intense and purer love. These supplements are neither beyond the power of God nor contrary to His justice. It is certain—indeed most certain—that the unfaithful soul does not deserve them, but fervent and persevering prayer, to which God has promised everything (Matt. 7:7-11), can infallibly obtain them.

15. Cf. Auguste Saudreau, *El ideal del alma ferviente*, pp. 128 ff.

16. Father Lallemand teaches that we should address these petitions to God frequently. Cf. *Spiritual Teaching*, IV, chap. 4, a. 1.

How could it be explained otherwise that great sinners have become great saints? Their past sins were the occasion for flying to higher virtue. The desire to atone for them induced the practice of great austerities and the redoubling of their fervent love for God. The tears of St. Peter, which continued to flow until the end of his life, would not have poured out so abundantly nor, consequently, produced so many acts of love if he had not denied his Master with such cowardice. Our Lord told St. Margaret of Cortona that her mortifications had so erased her nine disorderly years that He would place her among the choir of the virgins in heaven. These and many other examples teach us that we must never be discouraged because of our sins and past infidelities; but also that it is not enough to lament them: it is necessary to make reparation for them and expiate them. If the train of our life is already late as it draws nearer to its final station, it is evident that we will arrive with an irremediable delay unless we drastically increase speed, dedicating what is left of our life to a total and absolute surrender to the demands, ever more pressing, of the intimate union with God.

Expiation makes God more favorable to us, attracts more abundant and powerful graces, and removes from the soul the obstacles which, placed by sin, impede the perfect exercise of the virtues. In this way it not only atones for the preceding faults; through it the soul increases much more in virtue than it would if it had not sinned. St. Paul wrote these consoling words in his letter to the Romans: "To them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8:28), to which the genius of St. Augustine dared to add, "*etiam peccata*" (even sins themselves).

If, on the contrary, one does not take to heart the expiation of one's own faults and the reparation for the abuses committed against the graces and inspirations received from the Divine kindness, the Lord will give to faithful souls the graces that we despise in our foolishness and insanity. He warns us expressly in the parable of the pounds:

Take the pound [which the servant had not invested] away from him, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. And they said to Him: Lord, he hath ten pounds. But I say to you, that to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound: and from him that hath not, even that which he hath, shall be taken from him (Luke 19:24-26).

It is very consoling to consider that even after having been disloyal it is possible to recover the loss by being generous with God. However, it is certain that if we do not strive to redouble our fervor—taking advantage precisely

of our past infidelities—we will neither recuperate the lost time nor reach the degree of perfection to which God wanted to elevate us, like the train that cannot make up for the delay suffered halfway to its destination because the engineer failed to accelerate before reaching the last station.

Some mistrustful hearts imagine that because of their continuous infidelity to grace they can no longer expect to reach the degree of fervor from which they fell. They are very ignorant of the Divine longanimity and mercy. The scriptural texts that emphasize God's longanimity and mercy are innumerable: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God: for he is bountiful to forgive. For my thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:7-8). This means that God's mercy, which fills the universe, *misericordia Domini plena est terra* (Ps. 32:5), surpasses by far the idea that the feeble minds of men can have of it.

Even those who abused the most, because they received the most, should have this confidence, because if they received so much it is because God preferred them; the only thing they need do is become what they were. St. Paul teaches us that the gifts of God, the vocation of the chosen people and, undoubtedly, the calling of a soul to an eminent height are irrevocable: *sine poenitentia enim sunt dona et vocatio Dei* (Rom. 11:29). Of course, the designs of God are suspended when man places obstacles to them; but God does not revoke His election. Remove the obstacles, and the original plans of Providence will be realized. Those who tasted the gifts of God, those who received a special vocation to sanctity, those who were favored with mystical graces, may have lost such immense favors through infidelity; but God, Who has treated them as privileged ones, is always disposed to enrich them with even greater graces if they choose to expiate generously their faults and past errors.

So we should foster in ourselves the holy ambition of acquiring for eternity this wealth of glory, or rather—since our happiness will consist in the love and possession of the beloved God—we must try to acquire the great sum of love that God predestined for us when He created us. However great our infidelities may have been until now, we must believe with firm confidence that with divine help we can repair and regain what was lost. But let us understand very well that to attain such a desirable result we must be generous whatever the cost. And it is necessary to start this task today, without new suicidal delays. The day is now far spent (Luke 24:29) and the night cometh when no man can work (John 9:4); or, putting it another way, the shadows

of the night of this life are already beginning to vanish and in the near horizon the first lights of eternity are dawning. We must hurry or we will arrive too late.

Consecration to the Holy Ghost

There is a magnificent formulation used in many religious communities to express to the Holy Ghost our total surrender and perfect consecration to His Divine Person. Obviously, it does not suffice to recite a prayer however sublime; it is necessary to *live* the perfect consecration we want to express through it. But there is no doubt that by *slowly reciting and savoring* the magnificent formulation included below we will end up obtaining from the Divine Mercy a perfect consonance between our life and what is expressed through this fervent prayer.¹⁷

O Holy Ghost! Divine link Who dost unite Father and Son in an ineffable and most intimate bond of love! Spirit of light and of truth, deign to pour forth all the fullness of Thy gifts on my poor soul, which I solemnly consecrate to Thee forever, so that Thou mayest be its preceptor, director and master. I humbly ask of Thee fidelity to all Thy desires and inspirations and a full and loving surrender to Thy divine action.

O Creator Spirit! Come, come to work in me the renewal for which I ardently sigh; such a renewal and transformation that it be like *a new creation*, all of grace, of purity and of love, with which I may truly begin the fully spiritual, heavenly, angelic and divine life that my Christian vocation demands.

Spirit of Sanctity, grant my soul the touch of Thy purity, and it will become whiter than snow! Sacred Fountain of Innocence, of Candor and of Virginity, let me drink of Thy divine water, quench the thirst for purity that burns me, baptizing me with that baptism of fire whose divine baptistry is Thy divinity, is Thyself! Envelope all of my being with its most pure flames. Destroy, devour, consume in the ardors of pure love everything in me that is imperfect, earthly and human; that is unworthy of Thee.

May Thy divine anointing renew my consecration as a temple of the entire Blessed Trinity and as a living member of Jesus Christ, to Whom I offer, with

17. We do not know the authorship of this precious prayer. It used to be distributed among select souls by the saintly Father Arintero, O.P., who founded the magazine *La Vida Sobrenatural*, and died in Salamanca on February 20, 1928, in the odor of sanctity. The cause of his beatification has already been introduced in Rome. We do not know whether he himself wrote the *Consecration to the Holy Ghost* or received it from one of the great souls that he directed to the heights of sanctity.

greater perfection than before, my soul, body, faculties and senses, with all that I am and have.

Wound me with love, O Holy Ghost, with one of those intimate and substantial touches, so that, like a flaming arrow, it may wound and transfix my heart, making me die to myself and to everything that is not the Beloved. A happy and mysterious transport which only Thou canst bring about, O Divine Spirit, and which I desire and humbly request.

Like a chariot of divine fire, snatch me away from the earth to heaven, from myself to God, making me live from now on in that paradise that is His heart.

Infuse me with the true spirit of my vocation and the great virtues which it demands, and which are a sure pledge of sanctity: love of the Cross and of humiliation and the scorn of everything that is transitory. Grant me, above all, a most profound humility and a holy hatred of myself. Establish charity in me and inebriate me with the wine that engenders virgins.

May my love for Jesus be most perfect, reaching the complete alienation of myself, that heavenly madness that causes one to lose the human sense of all things in order to follow the lights of Faith and the impulses of grace.

Receive me, therefore, O Holy Ghost, that I may give myself to Thee totally and completely. Possess me, grant me admittance to the most chaste delights of Thy union, that I may faint and expire in it of pure love upon receiving Thy kiss of peace. Amen.

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The eminent Dominican Father Antonio Royo Marín was for twenty years a professor of moral and dogmatic theology at the distinguished Theological School of Saint Stephen at Salamanca.



Father Antonio Royo Marín, O.P.

Having begun his seminary studies in Madrid in 1933 during the ill-fated years of Communist domination, he twice found himself on the brink of martyrdom in 1936, threatened to be shot by agitators. When the crusade for liberation was over, he entered the Dominican Order and completed his theological formation at the Theological School of Saint Stephen in Salamanca and the Angelicum in Rome. He received the title of Preacher General of the Order and for several years traveled throughout Spain, attracting crowds with his eloquence and fervor. He began his work as a writer while a professor at Salamanca. His twenty-four works of Catholic theology and doctrine have appeared in more than half a million copies in several editions, reprints and translations.

His fruitful efforts were recently recognized by His Holiness John Paul II, who awarded him the famous medal *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*, instituted by Leo XIII for outstanding service in defense of the Church and the Papacy.