

# Jesus Lives in Our Heart

## *The Exciting, Dynamic Mystery of the Divine Indwelling*

Fr. Bill McCarthy, MSA

### **The Greatest Fruit of the Incarnation**

One of the great mysteries of our Catholic faith is that Jesus, the unique Son of God became a man, in the womb of the Virgin Mary of Nazareth and was born on Christmas Day over 2,000 years ago. O, the wonder of the incarnation! Mystery of mysteries. Just to think - that helpless baby is the God who with His Mighty Power created the galaxies, and the total universe. That crying baby - is the God of all comfort. That tiny baby is the God of all majesty.

### **Why Did God Become Man?**

Yet the primary meaning of the Incarnation was not simply that Christ became a man in Bethlehem's stable, as awesome as that Mystery is. Nor even is it that He become Incarnate in the Eucharist at every Mass - as awesome and wondrous as that is. Not, the primary reason for the Incarnation is that Christ could be born with in us so that we could be living incarnations of His Spirit; so that every one of us the baptized could truly say with Mary, His Mother and St. Paul, "I live now, not I, but Jesus Christ lives within me." I am "another Christ". My hands are His hands. My mind is His mind. My eyes are His eyes. My lips are His lips. My heart is His heart.

We are His Mystical Body. He sees others through my eyes, heals and helps them with my hands, teaches and consoles them through my lips, prays for them through my heart. He continues His work of salvation, sanctification, healing, proclamation and evangelization in and through us. Jesus is the real meaning of the Incarnation - Christmas everyday and everywhere - but now, through US.

### **Jesus Is the "Inscape" of Everything - He Is the Image**

"He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures. In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, things visible and invisible. All were created through him; all were created for him. He is before all else that is. In him everything continues in being" (*Col 1:12-20*).

Everything that "is" outside of God was created by Him. God the Father, through a process of thought and word creation. The Father created everything through the word that is His Son - in the power of the Spirit. All of created reality comes from the Father, through the Son and in the wisdom, love and power of the Holy Spirit.

God thought of the universe and through His word spoke it into being. "Let it be." He thought of the earth and through His Son, said 'Let it be!' Then He thought of the night

and the day. He said, "Let there be light. Let there be sun, moon and stars; fishes, plants and animals." Finally, "let there be man and woman."

### **Hierarchy of Being**

God, therefore, is in everything there is. In Him, through Him and with Him. Everything stays in existence. God is in each and every thing by virtue of His wisdom, love and power. He thought of it, created it by His word and sustains us in existence by His Spirit. There is a mysterious "hierarchy of being", for God's presence in His creation differs from inanimate to animate being, from persons in the state of sin to the mysteries in the state of highest grace. He is present in a stone by reason of His creative act, which includes His wisdom, love and power. In a higher way, He is present in a flower, which possesses more of His life than a stone. He is more present in a dog than in a flower because a dog possesses consciousness which is a higher quality of God. He is more present in a pagan man than in a dog, because the man possesses higher qualities of God, namely intellect, will and conscience. He is still more present in a baptized soul that now in the state of grace uses his intellect to know God and His will to love Him and his conscience to desire how to please Him more.

2 Cor 3:18 - Increase in virtue + increase in grace

2 Peter 1 - Prayer, Fasting

He is still more present in the baptized soul that has just received the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of His Son in the Eucharist. He is most present in those cherished souls that are living in *the new and divine holiness* - the Divine Will. The presence of God in souls in the state of grace is called Divine Indwelling - a new fuller, richer presence whereby God's excellences and perfections are more fully realized.

### **The Divine Indwelling in the Fathers and Early Church**

In the early Church, the Fathers and saints were convinced of the Divine Indwelling and they acknowledged that this belief was widely accepted ("*sensum fidelium*"). In the acts of martyrs too, there are many references to this belief. St. Lucy, for example, declared to the judge that the Spirit of God dwelt in her and that her body was the temple and shrine of God. She died as a martyr in 303. A bishop of Caesarea, "the Father of Church History" (260-340) by the name of Eusebius, relates in his *History* that the father of Origen, Leonides, used to kneel by the bedside of his son and reverently hear his son's breath as he slept, because he realized his son's soul was a tabernacle where God dwelt. Children in their innocence were very fitting homes on earth of God to live.

### **We Can Participate in Trinitarian Life**

The God we worship is a family, a Trinity of persons, loving one another, deferring to one another, worshipping one another, loving one another, in union with each other. This Triune God by an utterly free and gratuitous act of his intellect and will decided to share Trinitarian life with us. They decided to make us "children of God". This process is called by the Fathers of the Church "theosis" or "deification". By grace (God's life in us) we are made "participators in the Divine Nature" (2 Pet 1:4). By grace we share the nature of God. Aristotle and Thomas differentiate between substance and accidents. One

of the accidents of God is “quality”. We never become co-substantial with God, but we do share His “quality of divinity.”

### **In the beginning...**

In the Garden of Eden, our proto-parents were tempted by the lying spirit that the reward of disobedience would be that they would become “as gods”. They did not realize that grace in their souls already elevated them supernaturally that they were indeed “children of God” who could walk and talk with Him in intimate friendship “in the cool of the evening.” They lost that preternatural grace by their original sins.

Where sin abounds, grace does more abound.

“O happy fault” that won for us such a Savior. Christ by his atoning death and resurrection restored what Adam and Eve lost. The grace of Redemption heals human nature, restores human nature and elevates human nature supernaturally so that we participate in the very life of God.

### **St. Augustine**

St. Augustine in a Christmas sermon said, “Beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal creator of all things, today become our Savior by being born of a mother. Of his own will he was born for us today, in time, so that he could lead us to His Father’s eternity. God became man so that man might become God. The Lord of the angels became man today so that man could eat the bread of angels” [Divine Office, Book 1, p. 541 for Saturday (from Jan. 2 to Epiphany) Sermon 13-PL39, 1097-98].

### **St. Leo the Great**

The great pope Leo said in a Christmas sermon, “Christian, resonate your dignity and now that you share in God’s own nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition. Bear in mind who is your head and whose body you are a member.” “Through the sacrament of baptism, you have become a temple of the Holy Spirit” (quoted in the Divine Office, Vol. 1 p. 405; and in the New Catechism PL 54,190-194).

### **St. Hippolytus**

St. Hippolytus states in a treatise On the Refutation of all Heresies:

“When we have come to know the true God, both our bodies and our souls will be immortal and incorruptible. We shall enter the kingdom of heaven, because while we lived on earth we acknowledged heaven’s King. Friends of God and coheirs with Christ, we shall be subject to no evil desires or inclinations, or to any affliction of body or soul, for *we shall have become divine*. It was because of our human condition that God *allowed* us to endure these things, but when we have been *deified* and made immortal, God has promised us a share in his own attributes.

“The saying, “Know yourself”, means therefore that we should recognize and acknowledge in ourselves the God who made us *in his own image*, for if we do this, we in turn will be recognized and acknowledged by our Maker. So let us not be at enmity with ourselves, but change our way of life without delay. *For Christ who is God, exalted*

*above all creation*, has taken away man's sin and has refashioned our fallen nature. in the beginning God made man in his image and so gave proof of his love for us. If we obey his holy commands and learn to imitate his goodness, we shall be like him and he will honor us. God is not beggarly, and for the sake of his own glory he has given us a share in his divinity."

### **St. Leo**

From a sermon by Saint Leo the Great:

"Although the state of infancy, which the majesty of the Son of God did not disdain to assume, developed with the passage of time into the maturity of manhood, and although after the triumph of the passion and the resurrection all his lowly acts undertaken on our behalf belong to the past, nevertheless today's feast of Christmas renews for us the sacred beginning of Jesus' life, his birth from the Virgin Mary. In the very act in which we are reverencing the birth of our Savior, we are also celebrating our own new birth. For the birth of Christ is the origin of the Christian people; and the birthday of the head is also the birthday of the body.

"Though each and every individual occupies a definite place in this body to which he has been called, and though all the progeny of the church is differentiated and marked with the passage of time, nevertheless as the whole community of the faithful, once begotten in the baptismal font, was crucified with Christ in the passion, raised up with him in the resurrection and at the ascension placed at the right hand of the Father, so too it is born with him in this Nativity, which we are celebrating today.

For every believer regenerated in Christ, no matter in what part of the whole world he may be, breaks with that ancient way of life that derives from original sin, and by rebirth is transformed into a new man. Henceforth, he is reckoned to be of the stock, not of his earthly father, but of Christ, who became Son of Man precisely that men could become sons of God; for unless in humility he had come down to us, none of us by our own merits could ever go up to him." (DeNavitatite PL 54, 213-6).

### **St. Athanasius**

By taking our nature and offering it in sacrifice, the words was to destroy it completely and then invest it with his own nature, and so prompted the Apostle to say: this corruptible body must put on incorruption; this mortal body must put on immortality. (PL 26:1062-66).

The words of St. John: The Word was made flesh, bears the same meaning, as we may see from a similar turn of phrase in St. Paul. Christ was made a curse for our self. Man's body has acquired something great through its communion and union with the Word. From being mortal it has become immortal (a divine attribute); though it was a living body it has become a spiritual one; though it was made from the earth, it has passed through the gates of heaven.

P. 485

### **Blessed Isaac of Stella**

In a sermon, Blessed Isaac said: “The Son of God is the first born of many brothers. Although by nature he is the only begotten, by grace he has joined many to himself and made them one with him. For to those who receive him *he has given the power to become sons of God*. He became the Son of Man and made many more sons of God, uniting them to himself by his love and power, so that they became as one. In themselves, they are many by reason of human descent, but in him they are one by Divine rebirth. The whole Christ and the unique Christ - the body and the blood - are one: *one because born of the same God in Heaven*, and of the same mother on earth. They are many sons, yet one son” (Sermon 51, PL 194, 1863-5).

God, our Creator, how wonderfully you made man. You transformed dust into your own image, and made it a slave in your own nature. (Prayer from Divine Office, Vol. I, p. 911)

Console us with the gift of your divine life (Prayer from the Divine Office, Vol. I, p. 254).

“For human nature, however, his flesh was to be a remedy since the power of the Godhead in it would restore human nature to its original grace” (from 5 Hundred Chapters by St. Maximus the Confessor PG 90, 1182-86).

### **St. Hippolytus**

“How if we become immortal, we shall also be divine; and if we become divine after rebirth in baptism through water and the Holy Spirit, we shall also be co-heirs with Christ after the Resurrection of the dead” (from the Divine Office, Vol. I, p. 587).

### **St. Thomas Aquinas**

#### Baptism

Thus Divine participation is given to the faithful at Baptism whose purpose it is to make us children of God. In other words, when you and I were baptized no longer were we simply the son or daughter of a human father and mother. Nor even did we become - as awesomely high as that would have been - a child of an angel. No we became sons and daughters of God. God’s own Trinitarian life came into us. We call it the Divine Indwelling. We call it grace. We call it Jesus in our hearts. We call it transformation into Christ. We call it “temples of the Spirit.” At any event, we took on a new nature, that of God Himself. We are His child by adoption and by grace. This is the “new birth”, the “being born again” or the “being born from above” that the Fathers speak of. The baptized soul by means of this sacrament is lifted above, supernaturally and lives a new life. This life is lived “with Christ in God” (Col 3:3). We have entered into the life of the Trinity. The Lord speaks of this as “the gift of God” (Jn 4:10). It bubbles forth as a “fountain of living water” (v.14) - enlightening our minds with inspired wisdom and enflaming our hearts with God’s love and empowering our lives with God’s Holy Spirit. This participation in the Divine Nature, therefore, is not mere metaphor. It is a living reality. We did not become co-substantial with God but we do share in the quality of His Divine life.

### **Like Mirrors**

St. Paul states it this way. “We with unveiled faces reflect like mirrors the brightness of the Son who is our glory. It is the work of the Spirit to transform us from glory into glory into Him whom we reflect” (2 Cor 3:18).

In this chapter, St. Paul had been speaking of Moses. He mentioned how Moses was so filled with the glory of the Lord that literally they had to put a veil over his face so that the Israelites could gaze upon him. Whenever Moses went into the Holy of Holies, he took off the veil and basked in Divine glory. When he came out, he put the veil on once more. The face of Moses was aglow.

Then St. Paul changes the metaphor and states that whenever Moses is read, the Israelites have a veil over their mind until they too accept God’s glory in the person of His son Jesus. But we who have been baptized, who have accepted Him as Lord of our lives “reflect like mirrors the brightness of the Son who is our glory.”

### **From Glory to Glory - the Journey into the New and Divine Holiness**

How do we go from glory to glory? How do we enter into deeper and more realized union with God? The Scriptures give us several keys.

#### **The Tabernacle Experience:**

#### **Abiding in Christ - Vine & Branches**

St. Peter 2<sup>nd</sup>

#### **Obedience and Worship - the Ultimate Keys**

- 1) Obedience
- 2) Praise and Worship Leads to the Glory

#### **We Can Experience God’s Presence in Our Souls**

Back around 1956, Pierre Fransen wrote a landmark article widely discussed in theological circles as to whether the grace of God could be personally experienced. Bede Jarrett proclaimed with the Fathers of the Church back in 1916 the same thing.

p. 21-24

Largely because of the Cursillo, Charismatic, House of Prayer, and Focolare Movements, countless millions have experienced the workings of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Some 120 million Catholics have made the Life in the Spirit Seminar and have been “baptized in the Spirit.” They have experienced for themselves the outflowing of prophetic words, resting in the Spirit, speaking in tongues, healings and other graces that flow from the Indwelling Presence of God in their souls.

#### **Pope John Paul II - The Greatest Theologian of the Spirit**

Pope John Paul II is the greatest doctor of the Spirit ever. From 1989 to 1991, he gave a whole 80 part catechesis on the Holy Spirit. He had already written a whole encyclical on the Holy Spirit - as the "Lord and Giver of Life" (May 1986). During the year of the Spirit (1998) he gave another 28 part catechesis on the Spirit. In 1989, he gave seven consecutive homilies on the gifts of the Spirit. Every Pentecost he gives another discourse on the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He stated for example in 1998 to a group of a half million charismatic people gather in St. Peter's Square:

"Whenever the Spirit intervenes, he leaves people astonished. He brings about events of amazing newness; he radically changes persons and history. This was the unforgettable experience of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council during which, under the guidance of the same Spirit, the Church rediscovered the charismatic dimension as one of her constitutive elements: 'It is not only through the sacraments and the ministrations of the Church that the Holy Spirit makes holy the people, leads them and enriches them with his virtues. Allotting his gifts as he wills (cf. 1 Cor 12:11), he also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank ... He makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church'" (Lumen Gentium, n 12).

### **The Flowing of Gifts or Fruits of the Spirit's Indwelling**

This presence of the Spirit, the Indwelling grace and life of Christ in our souls, is not a passive inertia, but a dynamic power that enlightens our minds with wisdom and insights, inflames our hearts with love, forgiveness and compassion and empowers our lives with powerful gifts of miracles, signs, wonders, healings and humble service to others. What does the presence of Christ do from within our souls? He puts thoughts into our minds and desires into our hearts that we may think and will according to His good pleasure. That is what grace is - the supernatural life of God within us - that enlightens our minds and inflames our heart so that we may think as He inspires us to think and will as He desires us to will - in union with Him.

Mother Teresa said, "It is not possible..."

What does prayer do practically speaking?

First the Spirit enlightens our mind.

Second, the Spirit inflames our hearts.

Third, the Spirit empowers our lives. See diagram.

### **Enlightening Our Minds**

St. Paul tells us to put on the mind of Christ (1 Cor 1:30; Phil 2). "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." How do we do this? Very simply. By allowing the Spirit of Christ within us to put His thoughts in our minds. The mind is the receiver of God's messages. God "speaks" to us all the time. It is the most often repeated message of the Bible. Over 40,000 instances in the Bible are recorded where God spoke to someone like you or me. 7,000 times we have the exact words. "The Lord said" or "Thus said the Lord."

p. 11 in Catechism & Secularization in America

From without,

From within,

## **II. Enflaming our hearts.** P 25

Pg 3 Length, breath

Truth narrow,

Love broad

## **III. Empowering our lives**

### **A Foretaste of Heaven**

“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day” (Jn 6:57)

Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical on the Holy Ghost, stated that the only difference between the Indwelling Presence and the Beatific Vision in Heaven is a difference of condition or state - a difference purely accidental not essential. Heaven where eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it ever entered into the mind of man what wonders it contains - is begun here. Its heaven all the way to Heaven. St. Paul says - these wonders have been revealed to us here on earth.

Union of Heaven and Earth, of God and Man

This grace of God in our souls is real truth, a foretaste of something transcendent. From this divine indwelling, there flows at least two characteristics of holiness: tranformation and escatology. Transformation means that we are transformed into “other Christs”. Eschatology means that this transformation is a gift at once ecstatic in the present (always takes us out of ourselves) and in the future (never complete short of eternity). Holiness in other words is allowing the transcendent God “to immanentize” himself every more deeply in us, even at that immanentizing turns us ever more radically outside ourselves. God is love and to love is to be centered in the beloved, a man, a woman “for others”. This is my lfie “for you.” In Heaven, we will all be completely altruistic. No one will be turned in and upon themselves. We will be God centered and other centered but not self centered.

In order for us to endure the Beatific Vision, two things must be necessary. First, we need to be prepared, strengthened and transformed so as to survive the splendor, beauty and joy of God. For no man can see God and live. Only the Spirit of God within me can see God and live eternally. Otherwise, like St. Paul blinded by the beauty of Christ on the road to Damascus, the splendor of God’s face would blind us. Just as a tremendous noise could puncture an ear drum, and an overbright light could blind the eyes, so the overwhelming joy of Heaven could break our hearts and the vision of God strike with annihilation the poor, week souls of men.

Hence, the Beatific Vision has to be prepared for. We must be transformed from glory into glory in this life before we are capable of the Beatific Glory. Only the pure of heart can see God. WE must strive for that holiness and perfection without which no one can see God ( ), for nothing unclean can enter Heaven ( ).

### **15 Steps to Transformation**

Second, the Beatific Vision implies face to face communion and contact. It is no longer a question of faith and hope but of sight and possession. There can be no more veils, imperfections, disguises, compromises. No more sin. No more reflections. Now possession.

“We are God’s children now, what we shall be later has not yet come t light. This much we do know, when it comes to light we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 Jn ).

This then is the similarity between the life of grace and the Beatific Vision. What will be the difference? It will be largely a difference of consciousness. Here on earth so much distracts us. I could never eternally focus on God. There in Heaven I will - with nothing, or no one to distract me ever for a second. Here I am conscious of many things. There I will be conscious only of Him. My mind will be in continual ecstasy - focused eternally outside itself. My body will be a glorified one with no earthly weaknesses, pains or wounds, all of which hamper me here in this life. I shall take on again in a certain sense the consciousness of my childhood when I was constantly amazed with the majesty, beauty, bigness and wonder of the world around me. In this sense only spiritual “children” can enter the Kingdom of God. “Unless you become like little children” (filled with wonder, simplicity, humility and purity) “you cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” A child can thoroughly forget himself, for he has the childlike ability to forget his troubles, anxieties, and fear and enjoy the moment.

### **The Place of Forgiveness in the Growing Life of Grace**

Jesus did two things concerning holiness. He called us to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect, but paradoxically He always forgave repentant sinners no matter what. For Him, perfection was the perfection of compassion and mercy.

On the one hand, He called us to “love God with all of our minds, hearts, wills and emotion”, not even to “love with lust”, to cut out eyes and hands if in anyway they were the occasion of sin. In short, to be like Him. On the other hand, He was so compassionate -- to the woman caught in adultery, to Mary Magdalene, to the thief on the cross, to the prodigal son, to His bungling apostles, to Peter who denied Him, to Thomas who lost faith in Him; to the soldiers who crucified him. One of the great paradoxes of his followers will always be, how on the one hand do I constantly call people to perfection, while at the same time greeting them with tremendous compassion and mercy.

Many priests adopt this formula - in the pulpit preach, exhort and proclaim the gospel of

conversion in all of its force and purity; in the confessional to be an ambassador of mercy. However, many also today water down the former. You hear people say, “whatever happened to sin,” to “fire and brimstone,” to the reality of “hell.” Jesus is not the “teddy bear” god for whom anything goes. He is the God of holiness and justice who holds us accountable here or hereafter for each and every sinful thought, word or action, who constantly reminds us that we all reap what we sow. If we sow in the field of the flesh, so shall we reap. If we sow in the field of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit will be ours - love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, faithfulness, purity, long suffering and self-control.

However frightening this may be to all of us, Jesus reminds us that He is, above His justice, a God of compassion and mercy. The two great attributes of God stressed in Pope John Paul II Encyclical “Dives in Misericordia” are God’s love - his “hesed”, and his compassion - his “emeth”. No matter where we have been as prodigal children, He awaits our return with outstretched arms - ready to put upon us the robe of righteousness; the shoes of the household; and the ring demonstrating we are his brother and sister. How overwhelming is the mercy of God.

So merciful is Jesus that He took upon Himself our sins and for them was nailed to the cross so that by his stripes we are healed and forgiven. Then, after his Resurrection on Easter morn - that very evening He appeared to his priests - his apostles and said, “As the Father has sent me, I also send you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven. Whose sins you shall retain they are retained.”

When you realize that over 95 percent of all people walk around loaded with at least neurotic if not psychotic guilt. When you realize further that there is no human or psychological answer to guilt - absolutely none. When you realize furthermore that what most people do with guilt is one of four things - each of which is psychologically harmful - Most people repress guilt. This causes sleepless nights, nervous tensions and internal medical problems. It also causes psychological and emotional problems. Our psychiatric institutions are filled with people who are loaded with guilt. Many people deny guilt. They just do not face it. They say it isn’t there.

### **The Primacy of Obedience in Yielding to the Spirit**

The most quintessential virtue for an anointed life is obedience. The Spirit is within me, but I must surrender myself to His influence. The Spirit must have dominance in my life. In short, Jesus must be Lord. God’s Kingdom can only be entered by God’s Spirit within me. His wisdom comes from His Spirit, not mine. His love is the gift of His Spirit, it is not carnal love. His power is His Holy Spirit at work within me. The Kingdom of God is exactly that. It is that realm of living where Jesus is Lord and where His Spirit is in control enlightening our minds, inflaming our hearts and empowering our lives with God’s wisdom. God’s love and God’s power.

There we must obey. The heart of love is obedience. “If you love me obey my commands.” Jesus is the way - He always did the Father’s will (Jn 5:19 & 30). I must do

the same.

Fr. John Randall's "Seek Wisdom."

St. Thomas p. 68

P. 69

God's gifts make us aware of His guidance.

P. 73

### **Fine tuning our minds and wills - the Tabernacle Experience.**

We need the gifts of the Spirit to walk I God's ways. To live this supernatural life we need all these supernatural gifts. Basically, they are threefold - the wisdom gifts, the love gifts, the power gifts.

### **The Wisdom Gifts**

#### **The Fallen State of Man**

God is speaking all the time, but so is the powerful and noisy voices of the world, the flesh and the devil. We can get so caught up on the things of this work and the desires of the flesh that we fail to hear and obey the tiny voice of the Spirit.

### **In the beginning God**

It all starts with God. The God that Catholics worship is a family, a Trinity of Persons loving one another, deferring to one another, delighting in one another. So when God, Father, Son and Spirit, decided to create man, God made mankind into their "image and likeness." Since God is a family, mankind would be a family.

### **God's master plan – to create family on earth his way**

This, therefore, is the master plan of God to create a covenanted people in God's image and likeness:

- since God is a family, his people would be a family
- since God is Love, his people would be loving
- since God is one, his people would be one (not divided)
- since God is holy, his people would be called to holiness
- since God loves everyone, his people would be catholic
- since God is love diffusive of itself, his people would be apostolic.

### **As is God, so are his people**

Since God is divine, his people would participate in his divinity. No one has stated

this more simply, clearly and profoundly than Pope John Paul II himself. “God in his deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since he has in himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of family, which is love. This subject of the family is not, therefore, extraneous to the subject of the Holy Spirit” (Puebla: *A Pilgrimage of Faith*, Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, 1979, p. 86).

Trinity is God’s eternal identity. It is precisely trinitarian life that God wants to share with us so that we can be “participators in his divine nature” (*1 Pet 2:4*).

## **Applying all this to us in four aspects**

### **1. As to creation**

Since God is family and we are made to God’s image and likeness, we are called to be and created to be “one family,” loving one another as Father, Son and Spirit love another. God is more than Creator. God is a trinity of persons who want to share their very trinitarian life with us. We are called to be sons and daughters of God, who relate to God personally as Father, Son and Spirit.

### **God is Father**

It is of extreme personal, practical importance that we relate to God as Father, not simply as judge, teacher, or creator. Because we know that God is our loving Father, we can relax and be his beloved sons and daughters. We need not live in fear of God as some do. He is our loving Father who loves us unconditionally as we are because we are his children. This is a powerful insight that truly begins our spiritual journey, the realization that we can approach the Father with the same intimacy of a little Hebrew child sitting on Papa’s lap and saying “Abba,” or a little American child calling out “Daddy.”

### **Jesus is Son**

It is also of extremely practical and personal importance to believe that this loving eternal Father has sent his Son Jesus into this world and into our Church and into our hearts to give us a new life by his Spirit. This realization also changes everything – the way we look at ourselves as temples of his Spirit, the way we look at others as other Christs. Because of Jesus we all can realize that we have:

- a new nature – we are children of God
- a new identity – we are other Christs
- a new image of self – we are fearfully and wonderfully made
- a new mind – we can think like Jesus
- a new heart – we can love like Jesus
- a new power – we can act like Jesus
- a new family – we are brothers and sisters in the Church
- a new Mother – the mother of Jesus is the mother of Jesus in us
- a new mission – we are called to continue across our time and space his redemptive, healing, evangelizing work
- a new fire – the fire of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Spirit is with us**

Without the Holy Spirit we would be impoverished spiritually, emotionally and physically, for the Spirit enlightens our minds to think like Jesus, enflames our hearts to love like him empowers our lives to act like him, guides our bodies to walk in his steps. The Spirit is the soul of the Church.

**2. As to covenant and law**

A covenant is more than a legal contract. It is a sacred family bond. God’s progressive covenants in salvation history with Adam (before and after the fall), Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Ezra and finally Jesus reveals how he fathers his ever expanding family and maintains unity and solidarity.

So Christ’s kingdom is not restricted to one region or race; nor is it governed by political coercion, military force and human fear, but by spiritual means, sacramental graces and divine mercy and love.

This is the constitution of the New Covenant, and it is actualized within the Catholic Church. All human beings are now called to become members of this universal family of God in order to serve as instruments in the Father’s work of reconciliation through the Son and by the Spirit. Human power alone is incapable of such a task.

Covenant Mediator Jesus	Adam	Noah	Abram	Moses	David	Ezra
Covenant Role Royal High Priest	Husband	Father	Chieftain	Judge	King	Priest
Covenant Form Catholic Church	Marriage	Household	Tribe	Nation	National Kingdom	Priestly Kingdom
Covenant Sign Eucharist	Sabbath	Rainbow	Circumcision	Passover	Throne	Altar

Thus we see how God fathers his family by means of the covenant throughout the various periods of history. At each and every stage, the covenant is what God uses to maintain the spiritual solidarity and structural unity of his family, as it keeps growing from one age to the next, until at last his children form a fully international household of faith.

This is the very thing that our world needs most at the present time: a new vision of real and lasting family unity under God the Father. Western society has become a culture made of people who share little more in common than the commercial freedoms needed to pursue our own private interests as individuals. What we really need – and long for – is

the covenant love of a family, God's family.

Therefore the blessings and curses of the covenants are not arbitrary stipulations imposed by a superior or judge, but rather expressions of God's fatherly wisdom, goodness and love. We must obey them to mature as sons and daughters to become like God. When God keeps covenants with his people, he is just being true to himself, for trinity is a covenanted being. Covenant is what God does because covenant is who God is.

As in God, so in us. This is the principle. Since God is trinity, we are his family. If God is one, we are meant to be one. A divided Church makes no more sense than a divided God. If God is holy, we must strive to be holy. If God loves everyone, his Church, his family, his people must be catholic. If God is a faithful spouse, then he must love only one Bride.

### **3. As to sin and judgment**

More than broken laws, sin means the breaking of covenants, broken hearts, broken marriages, broken churches and broken lives. At its core, sin is a failure to keep the covenants, so we lose or weaken the graces of divine sonship and daughtership. We do not love as the Spirit inspires us to love. We do not love as God loves. When this sin is mortal, it ends in death because mortal sin kills God's life in us. Everyone reaps what he sows. If we sin, we reap the effects of sin, the curses of sin. Just as every response to the covenants ends in blessings, so every failure to respond ends in punishments and curses.

The curses should lead to repentance and therefore to blessings. The curses are not expressions of his hatred, but of his fatherly love and discipline. Every good father punishes his children so that they will get back on track. God's love here is remedial, restorative, healing and redemptive. God is love (*1 Jn 4:8*), always love. However, his love is a consuming fire (*Heb 12:29*). That fiery love reflects, as Scott Hahn says, the very inner life of Father, Son and Spirit. When we reject God's love, we are burned by it. Just as when you turn toward the sun your skin browns and is healthy, when you turn away from it, it gets sickly white. Seeing God as Father helps us to see sin and judgment as they are – signs of his love and of his call to come back to him and his blessings.

### **4. As to salvation and the Church**

Salvation is not only *from* alienation, separation and sin but *to* sonship and daughtership in the family of God. When you were born God placed you in a natural family to nurture, love, protect and guide you. He gave you a mother, father, brothers and sisters. When you were born again in baptism, God placed you in his family, the Church, to nurture, love, protect and guide you. He gave you his Father to be your father and his mother to be your mother. He gave you brothers and sisters in Christ. Not only were you forgiven and saved from alienation and sin, you were adopted into God's covenanted family and divinized by his grace. You became "partakers of the divine nature" (*2 Pet 1:4*). This is why God ultimately created us – to his share trinitarian life. Self-sacrificing love is what Jesus comes to bring us. He became a servant so that sons and daughters, who had chosen to serve the devil, might be restored as sons and daughters of God. "The Son of God became the Son of Man so that sons of men could become sons of God" (St. Athanasius).

Christ fulfilled all the Old Testament covenants by establishing one that would be

universal, for all nations and all mankind. In short, it would be a catholic covenant. By establishing this new covenant, Christ founded his one true Church as an extension of his incarnation and trinitarian life. The Catholic Church is the means of salvation for all mankind since it is the very Mystical Body of Christ. We are all saved through Christ incarnate. Any spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ was in the flesh is not of God. Therefore, the Catholic Church is the universal family of God outside of which there is no incarnate Christ, and therefore no saving life. Since the essence of salvation is divine sonship in the family of God, to speak of salvation outside of God's family, the Church, is to confuse things greatly since being outside God's family is precisely what we need to be saved from. For an individual alienated from the Church salvation is just not possible. It is not God's plan. God's plan is always to form his family on earth his way. Every other religion has man reaching up to God, trying to form his own Tower of Babel. God's plan is to reach down through his Son and his Spirit to transform us into his image and likeness as his one, holy, universal family.