

THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

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MY FATHER'S HOUSE

THE CALL

Why are we here? What is life about? What is the true purpose for our existence, as human beings and as Christians—this is the crucial question. Only God through His Revelation can answer it infallibly. He answers it both in the Old and New Testaments. Our calling and our destiny is to share in the very Trinitarian life of God, to become “partakers of the Divine Nature.” (2 Pet 2:3-4)

TO SHARE GOD'S OWN LIFE

Yes, God created us so that God could share his own Trinitarian life with us. Just as Father, Son, & Spirit:

Delight in one another

Love one another

Reverence one another

Defer to one another

Rejoice in one another

Communicate to one another

In infinite love, support and reverence that is what the Father wants to communicate to us — to make us adopted children of God. This is an awesome calling. Yet God “before the foundation of the world” chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless in God’s sight—to be full of grace—God’s own life.

THE COVENANTS

For this reason God prepared several covenants—each were far reaching than the last.

Covenant Time-Line/Salvation History

Time-Era: ???	c 2500BC	c 2000BC	c 1500BC	c 1000BC	c 500BC	3BC-30AD
Mediator: Adam	Noah	Abraham	Moses	David	Ezra	Christ
Role: Husband	Father	Chieftain	Judge	King	Priest	High Priest/King
Structure: Marriage	Household	Tribe	Nation	Kingdom	Priesthood	Church
Sign: Sabbath	Rainbow	Circumcision	Passover	Throne	Temple	Eucharist

Notice that each covenant had a simple male father, priestly head. In his beautiful and powerful book, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises*, Scott Hahn, a former Methodist minister and now a powerful Catholic teacher and evangelist, shows how each of the Old Testament covenants embraced an ever-widening circle of people until they became universal or catholic. This was God’s master plan of salvation – to create a universal covenant of people – a Catholic Church.

St. Paul speaks of this when he says, “To me certainly the least of all the saints this grace has been given to proclaim to all of you the unfathomable mystery of the love of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past, was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:8-11).

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 IS 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 Pt 2:4).

THE CHALLENGE

The challenge of Christianity, therefore, is to be emerged, that is baptized into the one holy universal family of God and to allow his Spirit to so quicken us that we think and love and act like Jesus. For God as we have seen has revealed himself in both the old covenant and the new covenant. In the old covenant, the spirit of God worked merely from without—that is, through creation, covenants, patriarchs, kings, prophets, rituals, and priests. In the new covenant, beginning with Pentecost, the Spirit of Jesus begins to work from within, working directly on our minds and hearts.

The indwelling presence of the Spirit is the key to understanding new Testament spirituality. Jesus says that the least person in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist—the greatest born of woman in the old covenant. Why? Because John the Baptist never experienced the indwelling presence of Jesus within His own heart. This is experience of the early Church did not begin until Pentecost.

Yet many people in the church today never fully realize the inward workings of the Spirit—that is, through the direct inspiration of their minds and hearts. They are not consciously aware that the Spirit of Jesus is forever enlightening their minds with inspired thoughts and inflaming their hearts with supernatural desires. Their conscious awareness of the Spirit is through the Bible, priests, laws, rituals and others. Yet, the great promise of Jesus is the promise of His indwelling Spirit.

As we open our minds to allow Jesus to fill them with the inspired gifts of wisdom, understanding, and prophecy, we literally have the *mind* of Christ. As we open our hearts to receive the inspired gifts of love, compassion, sensitivity, caring, and mercy, we literally begin to have the *heart* of Christ. And as we open our spirits to the power gifts of miracles, healings, and anointed service, we literally begin to *act* like Christ.

This is the good news! The promise of Jesus is the promise of His Indwelling Spirit. It is the presence, power, and peace of Jesus within our spirits.

We are made by God in three parts, just like the temple: an outer court—our bodies; an inner court—our souls; an inmost court—our spirits.

(Rom 8:13); thus being led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14). We can be sons (v. 14, 15, 16); more so joint heirs sharing His treasures (v.17) and awaiting the redemption of our bodies (v.23). The Spirit can help us with our daily problems (v.26) so that we can know that everything that happens, happens for our good (v.28) even our problems and weaknesses.

The purpose of all this is that our lives can be conformed to the image of Christ (v.29 cf 2 Cor 3:18). Knowing that God is always on our side (v.31). Christ will plead our cause, never condemning us (v.34).

Through the spirit of the love of Christ (v. 35-36), we can be more than conquerors (v.37) entering into a Kingdom from which no one or nothing in the heavens or on earth can separate us (v.38). These twenty-three provisions of Life in the Spirit provide Paul's best description of acting like Jesus.

What 1 Corinthians, chapter 1 is to wisdom and 1 Corinthians, chapter 13 is to love, Romans 8 is to action. Thus, we have the mind and heart and hands of Christ. We are His "ambassadors" of truth, love and action.

For Paul, the believer has the responsibility of letting Christ work in him and through him, to allow his character to be molded by God according to the pattern of Jesus, not as something which we achieve for ourselves (works), but as something which by openness to the Spirit of Christ, he allows Christ to work through him (grace and fruit). For Paul, everything is "*gift and grace.*" "By the grace of God, I am what I am" (cf 2 Cor 6:1; 2 Cor 4:6).

THE CROSS

In order to live this resurrected life, the cross of Jesus is central and essential. We must take up our cross daily and follow in Christ's footsteps. St. Paul teaches, "I preach Christ and him crucified. The power of God and the wisdom of God," and enigma to the rationalists and a stumbling block to surface believers. And yet Paul is emphatic, "Let that mindset be in you which is also in Christ Jesus. That even though he was God, he did not see Divinity itself as something to be clung to but rather he emptied himself. Took the form of our lowly nature and became obedient, than obedient again—obedient to even death on the cross. We must die to the old nature and its sinfulness in order to live a resurrected life by God's spirit.

The Spirit and the Cross – Flesh To Be Crucified

Therefore, according to Paul, the flesh has to be crucified. "With Christ, I am nailed to the cross, so I live now, not I but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). The cross, which is "a stumbling block for the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23) is for Paul "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (v.24).

Human power can't produce the works of God "lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power" (v.17); nor can it produce His wisdom "for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing" (v.18)

Paul preaches only one thing—"Jesus Christ and him crucified"; "even if an angel from heaven should preach another gospel, let him be anathema."

Unless a man *dies* to his own wisdom, Paul says he has no wisdom. It is God's wisdom charismatically given that alone instructs (v.13). "We have not received the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit who I s from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us" (v.12). "This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom" (this has been crucified), "but in words taught by the Spirit" (v.13).

The life received by grace, from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit is the one and only life for Paul (Gal 2:20).

When man and woman sinned, their spirits came under the dominance not of the Holy Spirit, but rather of the ego, that self-centered, prideful part of us, "the flesh." The challenge is precisely to think, love and act like Jesus, so that his Trinitarian life can be shared with brothers and sisters in the Church.

To Think Like Christ

The purpose of the indwelling Spirit is, first of all, to enlighten our minds so that we can have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16). Paul prays in Ephesians 1:17 that the "eyes of our understanding be enlightened," and asks us to be consecrated to God that we may experience a "renewing of our minds" (Rom 12:2). The gifts of the Spirit in St. Paul are, first, the *thought* gifts—wisdom, understanding, knowledge, prophecy, and discernment.

True wisdom is Jesus whom God has made to be His wisdom (1 Cor 1:30). This wisdom which is Jesus and of Jesus, is revealed to us "by (His) Spirit" (1 Cor 2:10-16). It is not "human" wisdom (1 Cor 2:13) that the Spirit of Christ imparts, but "divine wisdom" reaching into the "mystery" of what "eyes have not seen, nor ears heard nor has it so much as dawned upon man" (1 Cor 2:9). We who belong to Christ are capable of knowing His thoughts because we possess His *Pneuma*—a principle of knowledge that extends even to the deepest mysteries of God because such extraordinary knowledge come by revelation from His Spirit.

Accordingly, we do not follow a worldly spirit that communicates natural knowledge (1 Cor 1:12). Rather, we are to have the "mind of Christ" (1 Cor 1:16). For us, the Spirit was charismatic as to its discernable effect in our thought life. In the third chapter of 2nd Corinthians, Paul tells of Moses being on the mountain with God. The effect of this was that his whole being was aglow—so much so that his face had to be veiled because he was "too much" for the Israelites. "Their minds, of course, were dulled" (v. 14). "How much greater will be the glory of the ministry of the Spirit?" he muses (v.8).

The "veil" over our minds and hearts is removed, he tells us in verse 16, "whenever one turns to the Lord" so that "all of us gazing on the Lord's glory with unveiled faces are being transformed from glory to glory with his very image by the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). This is a beautiful and powerful verse. Yes, "thus we have the mind of Christ."

To Love Like Christ

Not only does the Spirit touch our minds with illumination, but also our hearts with love. *The greatest of all the gifts and fruits of the Spirit is love* (1 Cor 12:31; 1 Cor 12:1-13). In fact, Paul tells us that without this, all else is as a "clanging cymbal" or a "noisy gong"; that is, "it profits nothing" (v. 1-3).

This love is born of the spirit; therefore, it is the "love of Christ which urges us on." It is "patient, kind not jealous, nor proud, nor haughty. Nor is it self-seeking, prone to anger, nor brooding." It rejoices in truth, holiness and beauty. There is no limit to its power to forbear, to trust, to hope, to endure. It is unfailing and eternal. It is the greatest of all virtues (1 Cor 13:4-13). So Paul tells us to put on "love which binds the rest together and makes them perfect" (Col 3:14). In short, we must have the heart of Christ.

To Act Like Christ

Paul completes his trilogy of thinking, loving and acting like Christ and in Christ by telling us that the Spirit of Christ within us both "wills and accomplishes of His good pleasure." He tells us that the Spirit helps us in our infirmity to act like Christ (Rom 8:26).

Life in the Spirit (Romans 8)

We can live without condemnation (Rom 8:1), and be free from the vicious circle of sin and death (Rom 8:2); thus pleasing God (Rom 8:5). We can have soul—peace (Rom 8:6) as the indwelling Spirit controls us (Rom 8:9) even as our mortal bodies can be quickened (Rom 8:11) as we put to death the evil deeds of our bodies

The cross is the flip side of *life in the Spirit* for Paul. All that human nature could do without grace, without the Spirit, avails absolutely nothing. If not, then Christ "died for nothing" (Gal 2:21). Only that which is produced by the Spirit, produces "life" (Rom 8; 2 Cor 3:4).

In short, the life of Christ produced by the Spirit of Christ is the life of grace. Anything else must be crucified. All that is of self, by self, even self for God must be "crucified." "We who have been baptized have been baptized into His death" (Rom 6:3). We were buried with Him through baptism in His death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of His Father, we too might live a new life in Him" (v.4).

The Spirit of God stands in contrast to the flesh, the world and the devil. It is only as these are crucified and the flesh has nothing to glory in that the Spirit will work. As Christ was empty to be filled, so we also must be (Phil 2:5ff). The cross turns everything upside down. Man's pride is turned into God's humility. Man's hatred is turned into God's love. Man's selfishness is turned into God's charity. In short, man's ways are turned into God's ways. Are carnal search for money, pleasure and power are changed into an acceptance of poverty, chastity and obedience as Jesus becomes our treasure, our romance and our lord. That which divides earth from heaven is the cross. The things of the world grow dim and the light of its marvelous grace. It is precisely in and through the sacraments, especially those of confession and communion, that Christ gives us the ability to die to selfishness and sin and to rise with him in holiness and in virtue.

CONFESSION

That is why the first public act of Jesus on Easter Sunday evening was to appear to his apostles and give to them the power to forgive sins. "As the father has sent me, now I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. Who's sins you shall forgive they are forgiven." Each time one goes to confession and humbles himself before the Merciful Savior, they receive three awesome, miraculous graces. First, every bit of sin and guilt is washed clean through the blood of the Lamb administered through Christ's priests. Second, all bitterness, hatred and unforgiveness is let go of as we penitents forgive those who have hurt us. Finally, we are given the awesome, fantastic power to forgive ourselves. That is to stand in righteousness knowing that we are entirely cleansed so that we can get on with our lives.

COMMUNION

All of this leads to the summit of Christian life and the greatest of all the sacraments, the Eucharist or Holy Communion. In fact, the greatest was to worship the Father in spirit and truth is to celebrate Mass and to receive His precious body, blood, soul and divinity. At the Mass, we offer the highest praise to the Father. At this sacred liturgy we join all the angels and saints in their continuous act of worship to the Father, with the Son in the power of the Spirit.

The New Passover

The Mass is the Passover fulfilled and renewed. The Pascal lamb has been replaced by Jesus, who is the lamb of God for by His shed blood, we pass over from death to life. The bitter herbs have been replaced by the bitter agony of Christ's death on the cross. At the last supper, Jesus said, "I have desired to eat this Passover with you." Then he took the bread, gave thanks, blessed it and said, "This is my body, do this in remembrance of me." Likewise, after he supped, he took the chalice of wine, blessed it and said, "Take this and drink all of you, this is the chalice of my blood, the new and everlasting covenant. This shall be shed for you and for all so that sins might be forgiven. Do this in memory of me." In and through the Mass, Jesus has offered to us an everlasting sharing in the Pascal mystery, that is, His death and resurrection. We share His death to selfishness and sin and His resurrection to new life and hope.

Food For The Journey

The Eucharist is the food or sustenance of Christian life. Every time we receive the Holy Eucharist, we come into deepest communion with Christ. This is why the Holy Eucharist is called Holy Communion. With Jesus Eucharistically present in the depths of our hearts, we listen as He speaks to us through the thoughts that He puts into our minds and the desires that He inflames in our hearts. We speak to Him—worshipping Him, praising and thanking Him for all that He is and has done and is doing for us. Like Mary, our mother, we too can say, He lives in me. We have become a tabernacle—a dwelling place for our Savior. This indwelling presence of our Eucharistic Lord transforms us. Our minds are enlightened with the insights that He gives to us. Our hearts are aflame with the desires He now pours into them. Our spirits are enlivened with a new strength and power to do the works of God and to resist the temptations of the flesh towards laziness, worldliness, lust control and selfishness.

THE COMMISSION

Just before he left us, Jesus gave us the great commission—to go forth and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Teaching them to “observe everything I have commanded you and know that I am with you, even to the consummation of the world.” Christianity is essentially and totally a matter of evangelization. Evangelization therefore is the essential and total ministry of the Church. We are to bring Christ’s spirit, personality and gospel to bear on our own lives and on the lives of all we come in contact with. We are to continue our cross, time and space--his redemptive and healing work. For we are his hands, his eyes, his feet and his body. Christ’s instrument of salvation is his mystical body. He works in and through the Church. Christ is counting upon us to be his light in a darkened world. Therefore we are to be committed to him, his gospel and his work.

COMMITMENT

St. Paul tells us to present ourselves as living sacrifices to Christ as Savior but more so as Lord. We are to offer him our time, talent and treasure, our intellects, our wills, our emotions, our friends, our families and foes. We are to be totally committed to his work of salvation.