

## TEMPLES OF THE HOLY GHOST

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BRO. JOACHIM BAUER, O. P.



HE visible universe is a vast book. The wooded hills, far spreading vales and stately trees, the babbling brooks and the bright hued flowers are the pages in which we can read much concerning the presence, wisdom, power and beauty of God. God appears in all creation because He is the cause of all, everything mirrors Him. He manifests Himself within every pebble and flower and child. Nothing that exists can fail to give evidence of Him for He is the source of all energy, power and existence. In man He is the life of the soul, "the soul's soul." For although God is present to everything in creation and is more intimately present to man than all other creatures of this world, nevertheless He dwells in the souls of the just by grace. Speaking of the effect of receiving the Spirit of God through grace, St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Know you not that you are temples of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

No truth is clearer, none is referred to more frequently in the New Testament than this concerning the mission, the giving and indwelling of the Divine Persons in the souls of the just. Christ alluded to it time and again, especially when He was about to leave His Apostles and disciples. "I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go; for if I go not the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever; the Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor knoweth Him; but you shall know Him, because He shall abide with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you." Christ who had been the comfort and strength of His followers was to depart, but He promised them another comforter, the Holy Ghost. This mission of the Holy Ghost, this giving of the Paraclete was not to be conferred exclusively on the Apostles, it was to be the privilege of all who through grace are made children

of God. For this reason St. Paul said to the Galatians: "Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts."

At first sight it might seem that the mission and giving of the Holy Ghost is to be understood only in the sense of the presence of the Paraclete through the perfections and favors which are appropriated by Him and thus manifest Him, and not as a real coming of the Person Himself. Such was the understanding of the Arians and Macedonians. The Greek schismatics in the fifteenth century were of a similar mind. But Catholic theologians in general, with St. Thomas, do not hesitate to qualify as erroneous the opinion that "teaches that the Holy Ghost is not given, but His gifts are given."<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas goes even further, teaching that with and through grace we receive also the Holy Ghost who is thus "possessed by man and dwells within Him, in the very gift of sanctifying grace."<sup>2</sup> Nor, is it only at the hour of justification that we receive the Holy Ghost for there is a repeated giving of this Divine Person at each new and extraordinary advance we make in virtue, as well as a fresh increase of grace and charity in our hearts. How beneficently does not God repay us for every good work that we perform for Him.

But what is the manner of presence with which God honors the just upon earth? The teaching of the Angelic Doctor, borrowed from Sacred Scripture, is to the effect that grace is nothing else than the beginning in us of the future glory of heaven. Hence we have already received germinally what will one day constitute our eternal happiness. While on earth we have need of the torch of faith and the light of revelation to guide us through the darkness of the present night. And since the word of God teaches us that with and through sanctifying grace the Holy Ghost is sent to us and given to us, that He dwells in us and wills always to remain in us so that we may begin to enjoy His Divine Person here below, then surely this enjoyment supposes a real presence of the object loved. His presence is not merely a presence but a real possession which even here begins to bear fruit of enjoyment. This union of the just soul with God is far superior to that which binds the unsanctified soul with its Creator. This union is surpassed only by the union of the two natures in the Person of Christ and it is so blissful that, when fervently cultivated, it is in the true sense of the word a fore-

taste of heaven's joys and a prelude to eternal happiness. For this reason St. Thomas asserts that there is an imperfect inception in this life itself of the future bliss and happiness of the saints. He compares it to the buds which are promise of the coming harvest.<sup>3</sup>

One experience of this union through sanctifying grace is that of a true and perfect friendship between the soul and God. To establish friendship between two beings three things are necessary. First, the affection which unites them must be true charity, that is the one desire is to do well to the other, and to seek not one's personal advantage but the well being of the person loved; secondly, this love must be mutual; thirdly, it must be founded on a common bond of likeness, on some similarity of condition or life, some equality. "*Amicitia aut pares invenit aut facit.*" Wonderful as it is, these three conditions are fulfilled in our friendship with the Spirit of God. For God certainly does not love us for any benefit that He can obtain from His love as He has no need of us. He is our friend, not for His need but that He might fulfill ours. He is our friend for what He could give—His life. And His friendship is surely mutual for St. John tells us: "Let us therefore love God because God first loved us." If we yearn for Him, He has already yearned for us, as He is our friend. Finally, there is a common bond of likeness and equality between ourselves and Him. He stooped to our level that He might lift us to His own. He became man that He might make man God, so the Holy Spirit dwells in us that we may dwell in Him. "Friendship either finds, or makes men equal." Finding us apart, it made us one. He who was divine and perfect came to us who were human and imperfect. By His grace we are raised to a supernatural level, and thus we come to know Him in some manner as He is.

This union of the soul with God becomes actual whenever we turn our mind and heart to talk to God reflectively. It shall be perfect and complete only in heaven. While on earth we must keep guard against three obstacles to this union with God. These are—sin, which has the power to destroy this union by turning us into enemies of God if it is mortal, or if venial sin, to weaken it by decreasing charity in our hearts; attachment to creatures and to the goods and pleasures of this world are as so many chains which hold back the soul in its flight to God; and mental dissipation turns our thoughts and affections away from Him

on whom they should all be centered. If we keep our souls free from these obstacles and centered on our true happiness then may we well advance in the paths of perfection, gain a foretaste of eternal bliss and labor incessantly to strengthen the bonds which unite us to God.

Having shown the fact of the presence of God in our souls as being a special and real presence through sanctifying grace, we naturally ask the purpose of this mission of the Holy Ghost to our souls. And if any subject should be of interest to us then surely this one should be, as none is of more value to us, none is more important in the great work of our lives—the salvation and sanctification of our souls. This is the very purpose and end of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. In the political world only great personages are chosen for diplomatic missions of the highest importance. How important then must this mission be which is entrusted to one of the Three Divine Persons. For His mission is to bring about the sanctification of our souls through the forgiveness of our sins and our justification. His entrance into a soul wherein He has not yet dwelt brings about first of all a complete and generous forgiveness of sins. Sinners though we are, God is our lover always. By sin we set up a barrier between ourselves and God, yet His love is always with us. Offended though He has been, He is always a God of reconciliation and exhorts the sinner to repentance. This reconciliation between the soul and the Holy Spirit can be so complete that all the treasures of merit which had been lost by sin are restored and with them the personal love of the Holy Ghost and sanctifying grace. The soul has not only been pardoned, but it has also been justified for through the gift of sanctifying grace we are cleansed from sin and made saints and friends of God.

Among the effects of this mission of the Holy Ghost and of His presence we may enumerate three—our deification, our adopted sonship and our becoming heirs of God. Since the fall of Adam man has entered the world a sinner. Since then we have been born in original sin, but through a miracle of Divine goodness God Himself became man that we might be deified. Nor could we ever doubt this if we were to contemplate for a moment the following words of St. John Chrysostom: "If you hesitate to believe that so great a boon should be bestowed on you, realize that the abasement of the Divine Word in the incarnation is a marvel far greater than your elevation."<sup>4</sup> St.

Peter teaches the same truth in no less concise and clear terms: "By Whom He hath given us most great and precious promises; that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature." St. Thomas in affirming that this masterwork of Divine power, through grace, is even superior to the work of creation itself, at least in the effect it produces if not in the manner of action, but echoes the thought of St. Augustine who eight centuries earlier said, that: "To justify a sinner is a work greater than to create heaven and earth; for heaven and earth shall pass away, but the justification and salvation of the predestined soul shall abide."<sup>5</sup>

This entire doctrine may be summed up in the Scholastic's definition of sanctifying grace as a supernatural and abiding gift, dwelling in the soul, a participation in the Divine nature and life, which sanctifies man and makes him a child of God. We are raised to the supernatural order because God wills that we contemplate Him as He is, and since the beatific vision is an act proper to God we must therefore be made to share in His nature. Amazing as this is, grace is but a means to an end—for the reception of a far greater gift and for a more complete deification, the reception of the Holy Ghost who comes with the Father and Son at the same moment as grace. The final purpose of grace is to place us in the actual possession of God here on earth, which will in turn end in a face to face contemplation in heaven. Here we have that which constitutes the real value of grace, the work of supernatural transformation which goes on throughout the Christian's life and comes to an end in our ultimate union with God when we participate in the beatific vision.

As if being made partakers of the Divine nature were not a dignity great enough, we are, through grace, further raised to the incomparable dignity of adopted sons of God. That this is not a purely external or honorary title, but a real and true sonship, is evident from St. John's words: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." As though this were not enough, he adds: "Dearly beloved, we are now sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him; because we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope in Him, sanctifieth himself, as He also is holy." Through grace, all the conditions of a true adoption are more than fulfilled. People of the world

usually adopt children because they have no children of their own. But God adopts us, not because He has no son of His own, but out of a pure motive of love, in order to pour forth on others the abundance of His perfections. Among men adoption presupposes a community or likeness of nature already existing, but before adopting us, it was necessary that God make us share in His nature by generating us spiritually. Next, if a stranger is adopted, he can obtain the right to inherit through a judicial decision, but in Divine adoption God not only marks out the person whom He wishes to make heir to His Divine goods but He also creates in that person the capacity that will enable him to take possession of his inheritance. Again, human adoption is a purely external act and a legal fiction, whereas by Divine adoption we are given the name of Christians, we are incorporated into the family of Jesus Christ, bound over to His teaching, and receive upon and within our souls that indelible character whereby we are made His sons, so that through the sacramental action of baptism and especially through the precious banquet of the Holy Eucharist, we imbibe the very blood of Him in whom we are adopted.

It is because our sonship is real and not purely nominal that we become heirs in the strictest sense, for "If sons, heirs also." This is the Apostle's conclusion. St. Augustine notes that "So great is the love of the Divine heir, that He has willed to have coheirs. . . . But the heritage which we have jointly with Christ is not made less to us than it is to Him, it is not lessened by however great a number of coheirs there may be associated with Him. It is as great among many as among few, as much to every single one as to all."<sup>6</sup> From this it is apparent that we can not speak of spiritual goods as we do of natural goods which can not integrally belong to several possessors at the same time. Spiritual goods, however, can be possessed simultaneously by a number of persons without entailing any division whatsoever, just as a teacher can not be said to divest himself of all the knowledge he has acquired because of the fact that he imparts it to a group of students gathered about him. God's wealth and spiritual goods consist not in external goods of the earth, all of which "is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," but it is Himself, His own divine perfections, in the possession and enjoyment of which He finds perfect happiness. "Eye hath not seen,

nor hath ear heard, nor hath it entered the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for those who love Him."

The question then naturally arises, since God gives us special prerogatives and privileges through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, how does he enable us to overcome the temptations and trials of life which must be overcome if we are to obtain this heritage for all eternity. Through the virtues, theological and cardinal, our appetitive faculties are fitted to follow promptly the dictates of right reason, through the Gifts the just soul is disposed to follow with docility the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. God thus moves us both by the virtues and by the Gifts; by the virtues in a way conformable to our nature, by the Gifts in a superior manner. For, through the Gifts of the Holy Ghost the load is in a large measure removed from our shoulders. When we perform an act of virtue, although helped by God's grace, it is we who perform the act and acquire the consequent merit; but in the movement of the Gifts it is not we but God who is the sole mover. He it is who has His hand on the tiller, He it is who guides, steers and propels. Hence, by the Gifts, it is He who has control of our souls. With His four Gifts that perfect the intelligence, He illumines our mind; with the one Gift that perfects the will, He inflames our desires; and with the two that perfect the passions, He strengthens and guides our emotions of love and fear. By means of the Gifts the soul is made responsive to every passing breath of God. When He illumines our mind and enables us to see His least suggestion—all this is His work through the Gifts. If we act according to His suggestions then do we profit by His Gifts. For, through His Gifts our minds are so opened that we see Him everywhere and in everything—in a flower, in every sorrow, in the soul of the sinner. And if in consequence of seeing Him in a sorrow, we endeavor to help that soul for His sake, then the good which we accomplish or try to accomplish becomes our way of profiting from the Gifts.

The lives of the saints exemplify the action of the Holy Spirit through the Gifts. Works performed by them, which to us might appear to be performed with rashness have God as their counsellor and mainstay. These chosen friends of God have had the guidance of the Holy Spirit. All their extraordinary works for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, are nothing else than the effects of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Yet the Gifts

are not reserved for the saints, as it is the universal teaching of the Doctors that they are the common heritage of all the just. The Angelic Doctor teaches that they are necessary for salvation. The infused virtues being necessary for actions meritorious of salvation, it is only in circumstances in which man is confronted with a particularly difficult situation, when he must practice virtue somewhat akin to a heroic degree—that the Gifts become indispensable. How many times does not a Christian, in the course of his life, find himself in the presence of just such serious crises where important resolutions must be taken, where a certain line of conduct must be followed amidst grave circumstances. Then it is that we must be especially directed and protected by Him who knows all and who directs all, for we of ourselves are powerless to know all that it is important to know, or to accomplish all that will be useful or necessary to do. This special help and the immense increase of energy is to be had only through unceasing prayer and the Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

It is true that the theological virtues unite us to God directly, yet the Gifts lend them a necessary cooperation. They give renewed life to our faith, our hope is quickened, our charity is inflamed, and withal we receive the savor of God and things Divine. The Gifts likewise give invaluable aid to the natural and moral virtues whose actions they perfect by supplying their deficit. The Gift of Counsel gives Prudence indispensable lights for its guidance; Justice receives strength to render to each his due; Piety often perfects the soul by inspiring it with feelings of filial tenderness towards God and mercy towards our neighbor. The Gift of Fortitude enables us to overcome bravely all obstacles which would deter us from good, strengthens us against the dread and fear of difficulties, and inspires us with courage to undertake more formidable tasks; while the Gift of Fear strengthens the virtue of temperance against the assaults of our rebellious flesh. In fine, the Gifts help us on to more heroic efforts in the practice of virtue. In fact, the Gifts have been compared to the sails of a ship, so that whereas a boat equipped with oars advances slowly and with much labor, the one whose sails are swelled with the wind glides along smoothly upon the waves.

Man has been launched on the sea of life. If he insists on rowing his bark to the shores of eternity he will find the labor

hard, the journey perilous. If he makes good use of the Gifts his sails will be filled with every breath of the Holy Spirit and his boat will glide along easily and smoothly, being moved and directed by God. God has willed that men be His living temples, He has given them prerogatives as His adopted sons and heirs, but He has left it to them to gain their heritage by using His Gifts, by being docile to His every suggestion and inspiration.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* I, Q. 43; A. 3 Obj. 1a.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* Ibid. in Corp. art.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* I, IIae. Q. 69; A. 2.

<sup>4</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homil.* II in Matt. n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine in *John Tract* 72, n. 3.

<sup>6</sup> St. Augustine in *Psalm* 49, n. 2.

