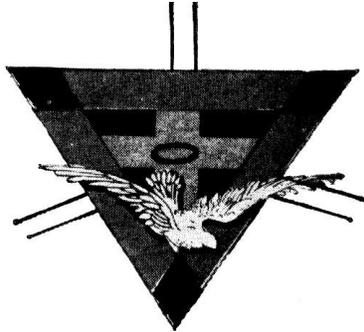


The Holy Spirit: The Tough but Tender Love of God Heaven's Refining Fire to Sanctify the Church and Us



“God is Love” and love is his first gift, containing all others. God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Because we are dead or at least wounded through sin, the first effect of the gift of love is the forgiveness of our sins. The communion of the Holy Spirit in the Church restores to the baptized the divine likeness lost through sin.

He, then, gives us the “pledge” or “first fruits” of our inheritance: the very life of the Holy Trinity, which is to love as “God [has] loved us.” This love (the “charity” of 1 Cor 13) is the source of the new life in Christ, made possible because we have received “power” from the Holy Spirit. ...

The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ’s faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. ... The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church. She is the sacrament of the Holy Trinity’s communion with men.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, #'s 733 – 737; 747)

Volumes could be written on the work and power of the Holy Spirit, but we will focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the heart of every human person as conveyed in the message of “Our Lady of America©.” This beautiful passage from the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** speaks to the essence of our Faith, the mystery of the Trinity in itself, in the Church and in us through the Divine Indwelling, a mystery that unfolds the whole economy of salvation and is the heart of “Our Lady of

America's©" message. The Trinity is the central doctrine of our Faith and the source of all holiness which comes from within through the Divine Indwelling. The economy of salvation begins with the awesome work of God as Creator in which He spills out His infinite beauty and uncontainable love in the multi-faceted work of creation and our existence. When our freedom, essential to our nature if we are to be capable of choice and love, mars that creation, God overcomes our sin with an even more wondrous work of redemption that not only restores our original innocence but transcends it! O felix culpa! O happy fault that merited so great a Redeemer. In the Blood of the Lamb we are regenerated in an ontological change, a change in our very beings, and are raised to a higher level of life in the sanctifying grace of Baptism that gives us a share in God's very own life, bestowed on us freely to become our own. The Trinity comes to dwell within us and unites us to Itself. God is one with us and we are one in Him in Whom we live and move and have our being. God crowns and completes His works of creation and redemption with the work of our sanctification. He brings us from glory to glory, constantly increasing our capacity for greater holiness and deeper union with Him until we are raised up and pressed to His bosom, like a child running to his daddy to be picked up and embraced, safe in the arms of that love from which he was born. This is heaven!

Can we ever comprehend the extravagance of God's love for His Church and for each one of us? He formed His Chosen People to be a beacon of light in the midst of the darkness of a pagan world. He placed His people under the protection of the Archangel Michael, Champion of God's honor and archenemy of Satan. So in the midst of our increasingly neo-pagan world, we, too, cry out Michael's name: "Who is like unto **God**? Who is like unto **our** God?" There is no limit to what God will do for us, as is evident in Sacred Scripture, both in the promises made and in the promises fulfilled. God does what He says. All we need do is surrender to this Love! God's Love is the tender love of a Father who longs for His children to come home to His house! He sends us His own Son to show us the way, and His own Spirit to be our Counselor, our Advocate, our Deliverer from every evil that ensnares us. He gives us the weapons of Truth and Grace to overthrow every deceit of the devil who jealously roams the earth seeking souls to devour lest they enjoy that holy communion with the Trinity which, in his pride and refusal to serve, he lost forever.

We define the Trinity as "three Persons in one God." Each person is distinct, yet none works without the other; they are a complete unity. Although we attribute different works to them to show their distinction, where one works all three act together. In our experience fathers stand at the origin of life. In Genesis, the book about the origin of things, we see God as Eternal Father and author of all creation speak His Word into the void and breathe His Spirit upon it to call forth life in all its forms. This Trinitarian nature of God was hidden though subtly foreshadowed in the Old Testament, which we call the

age of the Father as He began the formation of His people to testify to the pagan world of His Monotheistic nature. Our God is the one true God Who also gave testimony to that pagan world of His nature as a personal and paternal God Who would care for His people like a father cares for his child, and do marvelous things for them. Our God's love is a stark contrast to pagan gods who neither make nor keep covenant with those who worship them. Our God would lead His people to maturity in Faith so He might reveal more and more of His mystery to them, enabling them to become even more like unto Himself. God's chosen people would proclaim to the ends of the earth that our God is a living Word, a Spirit of Eternal Truth, an Everlasting Light and an Infinite Love. In those days God's revelation of Himself was given primarily through priests, prophets and kings, but a new day was foretold when the Spirit would be poured out on everyone and all would share in the anointing of the priest, the prophet and the king.

In the fullness of time when the world had been adequately prepared, a Light was sent to shatter the darkness of sin that enveloped the world and disfigured every creature with its impurities. At the Word of the Father and with the Breath of the Spirit the Sacred Humanity was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, that Woman promised at the dawn of creation and prepared from all eternity to be the spotless vessel to bear God into our world in our own flesh and blood so we might see Him and touch Him, and eventually taste Him, too, in the Bread of Life that is His own Body laid down for us on our altars in Eucharistic Communion. Who could imagine such bliss?

For thirty years that Sacred Humanity remained hidden in the humble home of Nazareth, but this birth marked the age of the Son Who was born to die so we might live. The Trinity, so quiet but so present at the birth of Jesus, is now proclaimed to the world as Jesus begins His public mission with the baptism of John in the River Jordan. The heavens opened and the Father's voice proclaimed the divinity of Jesus to all the world: **"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him."** And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, rested upon Jesus' shoulder. He was a constant companion to Jesus throughout His life and especially throughout His bitter passion and death, His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. Scripture shows us the Trinity always present at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of everything, for it is the cause of our being and the fulfillment of our destiny. "Before you were knit in your mother's womb I knew you." "I have made you and you are mine."

We are all familiar with a parent's love and the necessity to correct in order to teach right from wrong, wisdom from folly, truth from falsehood, goodness from evil. John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin and conversion of life, a necessary step before Jesus' baptism of the Spirit, is proof of that same need in the realm of our spiritual growth. Scripture says God chastises those whom He loves. We must confess our sins and repent of them if we are to change our lives and grow in grace. John confirmed that it was Jesus who would follow and baptize with fire and the

Holy Spirit. We recognize the “tough love” of God as the work of the Spirit, for it is the Spirit Who lifts the veil from our eyes to convict us of our sins by exposing our darkness to His light, our error to His Truth, our ignorance to His wisdom, our lusts of the flesh and for fame, power and money to His infinite purity and selflessness. He draws us out of hatred and into love; out of revenge and into forgiveness; out of ourselves and our huge egos into that Other Who consumes but does not devour. Yes, God’s Spirit does the work of correction, renewal, repentance and conversion so that we are emptied enough to have room for His gifts and His fruits, for transformation. This kind of “reform of life” that He effects in us must be continual if we are to grow in holiness, which is a painful process, for change demands the **recognition of a need for change** and a **commitment to it**, no matter how difficult. Change demands dying a “thousand deaths” over a lifetime, dying to the old self in order to rise with Christ in His Spirit into the glory of the Father.

It is this Holy Spirit who makes us **tough for good**, ready to stand up for what we believe, even to die for it, and for the One in whom we believe. In days past, when we were confirmed, we received a gentle slap on the cheek to remind us we must be soldiers for Christ, witnesses for Him to the ends of the earth, as ready to lay down our lives for Him as He was to lay down His for us. Do we have such toughness, such boldness, such conviction? Have we been baptized with this Spirit, not merely in a ritualistic way with our sacramental Baptism and Confirmation but with a personal experience of that power from on high Who is the promise of the Father Jesus pledged to send us when He ascended back to His Father? Then let us beg for such baptism of fire so we might breathe with God’s own breath and live with His own Spirit and love as He loves and live as He commands us to, loving one another as He has loved us. This period of time from Jesus’ Ascension into heaven until He comes again on the clouds in His glory is the age of the Holy Spirit, the age of the Church, that living Sacrament of God’s abiding Presence on earth. Since we are the Church, the Body of Christ, each of us must likewise be a sacrament of His real Presence walking amongst us.

We must put no limits on God’s Holy Spirit. He blows where He wills, when and upon whom He chooses, Jew and Gentile, baptized and unbaptized, rich and poor. He can work quietly and humbly in the soul, as gentle as a dove or as still as a dream, almost unseen until the soul bears so much fruit it can no longer go unnoticed. “By their fruits you will know them.” The Spirit can as easily come like a mighty wind as He did that first Pentecost, or as vivid as tongues of fire. Either way, we will know when He has come for we will find ourselves being refined and purified, being set free from the evil and demonic influences we may have allowed into our hearts. We will find our minds laid open with the Sword of Divine Truth. We will find our hearts slain with the Sword of Divine Charity that implants a purity and grace that can only come from heaven. This is the Love of God that calls us to holiness, waits for us, woos us,

embraces us when we surrender to it. It is the Love that pursues and cleanses, does battle in our souls and changes and transforms us so we can witness to Christ and give testimony to others of what God has done for us.

The Spirit comes with pain and with power. **He will chastise and chasten; He will expose us in the mirror of God's Eternal Eye so we see ourselves as God sees us as He effects a terrifyingly real awakening and correction of conscience.** He will crown us only after we have been tried and found worthy. How can we imitate the Master without walking with Him to Calvary bearing our own cross? This Holy Spirit will enable us to say "yes," "fiat," "thy will be done." He will enable us to pick up our own cross to follow Jesus, for He gives us His pledge that He will see us through until our passion is finished. Let us call on Him as Our Lady, Spouse of the Spirit, bids us do in her message as "Our Lady of America®" and allow ourselves to be purified and refined, embracing that "reform of life" Our Lady asks for and the study and practice of that deep mystery of the Divine Indwelling so necessary for our holiness. God's Love, His Spirit, is a tough love that pulls out the weeds and prepares the soil of our lives for bearing the gifts and fruits of the Spirit that build up God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. O Refining Fire! Burn away every impurity within us, for no impurity can come into the Presence of God. Make us holy as You are holy!

Let us listen to Our Lady's words on "reform of life" and the need for that refining fire of suffering if we are to learn the Secret of the Divine Indwelling Presence of the Most Holy Trinity in our souls. There is no birth or rebirth without its labor pains.

My child, nothing is accomplished without pain. Prepare to suffer much. You see the sword in the Heart of your Mother. Suffering completed the work of divine grace in my soul. He who refuses to suffer will never abide in the Spirit of Christ, will never be formed into His image.

My sweet child, the Father will never recognize a soul as His own unless He sees in it the likeness of His beloved Son. Souls must attain to the perfection of the Father through the Spirit of the Son.

I am the Mother of the sacred humanity, and it is my special work as co-redemptrix of the human race to help souls reach the sanctity of the Father in eternal union by showing them how to put on Christ, to imbibe His Spirit, and thus become one with Him.

Sweet child, beloved of my Son and cherished by me, my message has not been heeded nor have I yet found one to further the cause of renewal within. The Presence of the trinity within every human being is the focal point, the basis of interior holiness. From this will spring a

deep life of prayer and a love for penance as the discipline needed to convert all peoples to a serious preparation for the coming of my Son and His Kingdom.

You must try to make my people understand that the life of God within them is the source of their peace and happiness. There is no other way. This is what my Son came to teach and bring and it was for this He lived and died. Unless this mystery of God's Presence within is accepted and lived, peace will not come. It is the only way, believe me, my daughter.

(Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, "Our Lady of America©," Fostoria, Ohio, pgs. 23,24, and 37.)

In addressing the failure of those in authority to accept the visionary and her message, Our Lady addressed the role of the Spirit in making all things clear, providing light and understanding to those who oppose her.

Beloved daughter, you are not being accepted because you are a small one. But in the end all will come as I desire. Those who oppose you will receive light to understand. These good people mean well and if they are in authority it is for you to listen respectfully and obey. I will speak to them in their hearts and the Divine Spirit who makes all things clear will give them wisdom and understanding. In the end they will do as I wish. So, have patience, dear one, it will happen as I have said and those who have opposed me will become my most ardent and courageous supporters. Until this comes to pass, wait in trust, knowing that I never fail those who place their confidence in me.

Beloved daughter, how many let human wisdom guide them through life. This is a serious mistake that will cause much suffering. Unless human wisdom is guided and saturated by Divine Wisdom, it is a helpless yet dangerous tool in human hands. Helpless because it lacks understanding and true knowledge, dangerous because it leads to wrong paths of darkness where the only light is false like a mirage in the desert.

Dear child, evil is so insidious that it often passes for good. The simple and pure of heart alone can detect the difference. Many good works and many a good person or persons are thwarted and destroyed by apparently good people who are manipulated by the powers of evil because they do not possess that finer sense of being able to detect a false spirit from a true one. (Diary, pgs. 37-40.)

God's Spirit is our Divine Optician's prescription for seeing clearly what is right from what is wrong, what is God's Will from what is our own. He exposes that enduring

old heresy that “the end justifies the means.” He is God’s hearing aid that enables us to hear without doubt what God is speaking to us in His Word which is Truth and purity of body, mind, heart and soul.

Beware of any spirit which does not abide in the Holy Spirit and does not receive power and light from Him. Meditate on this often, dear child, so that only the Spirit of Truth may abide in you and be the light of your journey to the Father.

Beloved daughter, sweet child, there are those in high places in the Church who disobey and refuse respect to my Son’s Vicar on earth. These betray the teachings inspired by the Divine Spirit sent by my Son to be with the Church ‘til the end of time.

There are those who teach false doctrines, and those who repudiate the Holy Sacraments. They are filled with intellectual pride. And so refusing to follow my humble Son, they are being destroyed together with those who misguidedly follow them down the path of error and falsehood. Pray for these poor ones who do not realize the misery and wretchedness they are in and to which they have and are leading others.

Beloved daughter, there is so much untruth in the truth that is sought. Truth comes from Him who has been sent by my Son, the Spirit who is Truth. Pray continuously to be guided by this Spirit who is the true enlightenment. Many are those who seek truth from spirits who are false and lead only to a greater ignorance and a worse destruction. The Divine Spirit abides in my Son Jesus and is sent by Him. All other spirits are only true in Him, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity. (Diary, pgs. 43-44.)

The Holy Spirit is that double edged sword: He heals by wounding and tearing open the sores of our sins to expose them to the drying power of the Son, and He wounds when He heals by leaving us parched like the earth dry and thirsting for the reign of God. This Holy Spirit is the Fire of God that burns away every impurity that adulterates our hearts so we might become a pure white flame of desire for God above all things. It is the Spirit that changes us like the wheat that must be ground into flour for bread and the grapes that must be pressed into wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ to be blessed and broken for others as He was. It is the Spirit who enables us to live the Christian life the way God intended it to be lived, the way the early Christians lived it, boldly and fearlessly in their profession of faith in the person of Jesus whom they claimed as their personal Lord and Savior. Once baptized in the spirit, Jesus’ disciples were ready to follow His call anywhere, to proclaim Christ Crucified to the ends of the earth and to die for Him, if need be, to prove their love. Their Faith was simple

and profound at the same time: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, our Lord and our Savior. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, our only Mediator with the Father!

The Spirit is the fire that makes us so bold and so pure! Let us pray then for a new Pentecost, a new evangelization that will re-create that first love and fervor of the Church, that civilization of love that identified Christians as followers of Christ, that culture of life attested to by the abundance of miracles of body and soul that were so plentiful in the early Church and were meant to be so in every generation. Let us beg Jesus to send us His Spirit anew, like the thunderous wind when we need to be shaken to our roots in the call for conversion and reform of life so necessary to repair His present day Church; and like the gentle breeze in the trees where the dove sits when ready to rest in the goodness of the Lord.

O Holy Spirit, divine Spirit of light and love, I consecrate to You my understanding, my heart and my will, my whole being for time and for eternity. May my understanding be always submissive to Your heavenly inspirations and to the teachings of the Holy Catholic Church, of which You are the infallible Guide.

May my heart be ever inflamed with love of God and of my neighbor; may my will be ever conformed to the divine Will, and may my whole life be a faithful imitation of the life and virtues of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and You, Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

(St. Pius X, June 5, 1908.)

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