

THE HOLY SPIRIT

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"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:18)

When the Lord spoke the words of our text, He was preparing His disciples for the time when they would feel deserted. They would feel like little children who had lost their parents. The disciples were used to being with the Lord each day. They were used to seeing and hearing Him, walking and talking with Him. Their life revolved around Him. But it could no longer. It was important for the Lord to go even though His disciples could not easily understand why. He told them, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you" (*John 16:7*). Somehow this Helper would be better for the disciples than the familiar presence of Jesus. It was to their advantage that He was going. He would come to them again.

The Helper that the Lord promised His disciples is the Holy Spirit. Sometimes in the New Testament it is called the Counselor or in the Greek language, the Paraclete. Counselor in this context means a person who gives wise guidance to a person. This is because the Holy Spirit is the Divine truth (*True Christian Religion 139*). But it is not an image of truth fighting. It is not an image of truth judging. The Holy Spirit is called the comforter or helper. It is the Divine truth leading us, helping us and comforting us. The Holy Spirit is one way that we can think of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the work of the Lord's wisdom as it goes forth to lead people to heaven. It is the Lord gently opening the thoughts of a baby boy as he begins focus on the wide world around him. It is His firm leading as a young girl starts to recognize that responsible behavior leads to a happier life at home and in school. It is the source of the insight that a wise mother has for the most important needs of her children. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that can help give serenity to the aging man who is no longer able to be as active as he used to be. The work of the Holy Spirit is the work of reforming and regenerating all who adapt themselves and their lives to receive the Lord. The Holy Spirit is an expression of the Lord's infinite love taking form in perfect wisdom. It is the Lord accomplishing the fundamental goal of all creation.

If we define the work of the Holy Spirit broadly it seems that it has been active since the beginning of creation. Certainly the Divine Providence has been active from the first moment of time. However, something special came into existence after Jesus finished His work in this world. Remember the Gospel of John comments about a statement that the Lord made with these words: "But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (*John 7:39*). Many Christian theologians feel compelled to complete this phrase to say the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*. The translation of the Word that we most commonly use in this service adds this word. This is incorrect. In a very real sense, the Holy Spirit did not exist yet. The Lord's presence with the human race was different after Jesus finished His work in this world.

Before His advent, the Lord led each individual by the presence of angels and good spirits when that individual was in a state of mind that would allow for their presence. If a person felt the urge to serve his neighbor, the Lord could be present by means of angels to guide that affection to serve others. If the person felt hatred or envy, the Lord could not directly guide him away from this hatred, because angels or good spirits could not draw near to that state of mind. When the ruling affection in people's thoughts was dominantly good, the Lord could easily lead them to do good things. But as the human race as a whole slowly turned away from the Lord and a love of serving their neighbors, it become more and more difficult for the Lord to lead each individual and the power of evil gradually increased. When nearly all desire to do good and kind things had perished, the human race was likewise nearly cut off from heaven and life. Something had to change and change drastically.

But what could be changed? It is contrary to the Lord's love to force a change on us. Such a change would take away our freedom and the possibility of us ever enjoying the happiness of heaven. If the Lord had forced us to change, the result would have been a race of obedient human robots. If the human race could not be forced to change then what could be changed? The Lord had to change the way that He reached out to human beings. He had to change the way that He would be present with each of us today or else we would be hopelessly damned to hell. So the Lord chose to come to us. Because the Lord was born on earth, fought against each one of the hells and gave a new order to the heavens, reorganizing them into a more perfect form - because He did these things, He can now be present with us as the Holy Spirit even when our dominate state of mind is not good or wisely kind. He can still be with us and lead us even when we don't love doing what is good and true. We can be sure of His presence.

What is the presence of the Holy Spirit like? What if someone asked you if you had received the Holy Spirit? All of us can answer, "Yes." to this question. Whenever we have had even a glimmer of light of what is true, it is part of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Whenever we have had some insight into how to help another person or how to better live our lives, it is part of the presence of the Holy Spirit. All understanding of what is true comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit. We can have people who bring certain information to our attention, but it is always the Lord Himself who allows us to see what this truly means.

Not everyone receives the Holy Spirit in the same way. The presence of the Lord as the Holy Spirit does not come to us entirely apart from our choices. The Lord told His disciples that the world cannot receive the Helper, the Spirit of Truth because it does not behold Him or know Him. But the disciples could receive that Spirit. The Lord told His disciples that they knew the Holy Spirit because He abided with them and would be with them. The world in our minds cannot receive the Holy Spirit. Excessive concern for natural things or our own short-term well-being blocks out the light that the Lord would shed on our minds.

How can we receive the Holy Spirit more fully? The most important thing that we can do is develop a desire to know and understand the truth because we want to live a better life. The teachings for the New Church refer to this desire as "the affection for truth." Stated simply, this means that if we are truly concerned about being useful and helping others, a part of our mind will be constantly on the lookout for the knowledge and wisdom that will help us do our work. We can see this clearly in many examples in this world. The things that we have dedicated our lives to are what we find ourselves thinking about the moment that our mind is free to wander.

An affection for truth expresses itself in a desire to learn from the Lord. It is not good enough to pick up some workable ideas on how to live our lives and help others. What we need is something that we can get only by going to the Lord. Consider the following statement that focuses on what makes the church with each of us.

The church comes from the Lord and it exists in people who go to Him and live according to His commandments. No one at the present day denies that the church is the Lord's, and that because it is the Lord's, it is from the Lord. It exists in people who go to Him, because the Lord's church in the Christian world is founded on the Word, and the Word is from Him and from Him in such a way that it is Him. The Word contains Divine truth united to Divine good, and this also is the Lord . . . Moreover, the church exists in people who go to the Lord for the further reason that it exists in those who believe in Him. And no one can believe that He is God the Savior and Redeemer, Jehovah who is Righteousness, the door by which one must enter the sheepfold (that is to say, the church), the way, the truth and the life, that no one comes to the Father except through Him, that the Father and He are one, besides many other things that the

Lord Himself teaches – none of us, I say, can believe these things unless we get our belief from the Lord. No one can believe these things without going to the Lord, because He is God of heaven and earth, as He Himself also teaches. Who else should one go to? Who else can one go to? (*Conjugal Love* 129)

An affection for truth is a motivation to learn and truly see what the Word of the Lord means for our daily choices. The work *The True Christian Religion* states the case rather strongly. It says that for Christians who have the Word of God available to them, that the Word is the sole medium through which we can draw near to the Lord and into which the Lord enters (*True Christian Religion* 142). We must be led by the Lord through His Word. We can allow concerns of day-to-day living to crowd out any thoughts of higher and more lasting things. But to do this we have to ignore many indications that we should be thinking of these more lasting things. The words, tone of voice, facial expressions and actions of our friends, or children, or spouse can give us the little indicators that something isn't quite right. Something very important is being ignored. These signals can be dismissed as momentary distractions or irritations or they can cause us to raise our thinking and recognize that we are forgetting the more real and lasting parts of life - our relationships with our loved ones, with those who need us and benefit most directly from our attention and love.

For all their complexity, the teachings for the New Church have only one end in mind - the reestablishment of the fundamental basis for true Christianity. Each of us, as individuals, is to turn from the evil motivations that seek to express themselves in our lives and we should try to serve our neighbors. These fundamental ideas can be attacked on many fronts and the teachings for the New Church seek to ensure that none of these attacks can be successfully made - providing we form our thinking from their pages and the pages of the Old and New Testaments.

The Lord gives us a special promise. It is contained in the last book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation. It states, "Let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (*Revelation* 22:17). *The Apocalypse Revealed* tells us that these words mean that anyone who from love desires to learn what is true will be taught by the Lord. The Lord will come to us if we want Him (*Apocalypse Revealed* 956). The Holy Spirit will lead our thoughts and our motivations until we see what is true - not merely what is true in some abstract sense, but what is true for us individually, how that truth applies to our relations with others and how we should live our lives.

The Lord told His disciples that He would not leave them as orphans and that He would come to them. He also comes to us, teaching and inspiring, ever leading us to receive as much of His life as we can. The Lord wants us to think of His constant presence and feel the comfort of His guidance. He wants us to carry a certain inner peace as we live our busy lives. It is the peace of confidence - the confidence we can have because we are ready to meet our maker - the confidence we can have because we know that we are trying to follow the Lord. The Lord wants us to have this peace. His words for His disciples are also words for each of us. "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Don't let your heart be troubled or be afraid." The Lord will not leave us as orphans He will come to us. AMEN.

Lessons: Isaiah 60:1-3, 19-22, John 14:15-31, *Arcana Caelestia* 9818:14-15

Isaiah 60:1-22

¹ Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.

² For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.

³ The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising. . . .

¹⁹ "The sun shall no longer be your light by day, Nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; But the LORD will be to you an everlasting light, And your God your glory.

²⁰ Your sun shall no longer go down, Nor shall your moon withdraw itself; For the LORD will be your everlasting light, And the days of your mourning shall be ended.

²¹ Also your people *shall* all *be* righteous; They shall inherit the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified.

²² A little one shall become a thousand, And a small one a strong nation. I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time."

John 14:15-31

¹⁵ "If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. ²⁰ At that day you will know that I *am* in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. ²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" ²³ Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. ²⁴ He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. ²⁸ You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. ³¹ But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

Arcana Caelestia 9818:14-15

"The Spirit" which those believing in the Lord are to receive from Him means the life coming from the Lord that is the life of faith and love. . . "The Spirit" which believers were to receive, also called "the Holy Spirit", means the life brought by Divine Truth coming forth from the Lord. This life is the spiritual and heavenly life itself present in a person. The reason why it says "the Holy Spirit was not yet because Jesus was not yet glorified" is that while He was in the world the Lord Himself taught Divine Truth; but when He had been glorified, which was after the Resurrection, He taught it through angels and spirits. That holy influence present with a person, coming forth from the Lord through angels and spirits, whether in a discernible manner or an indiscernible one, is the Holy Spirit there. For in the Word Divine Truth coming forth from the Lord is called "holy."

This explains why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth and why it is said that He would lead into all truth, that He would not speak on His own [authority], but speak what He hears from the Lord, and that He would receive from the Lord what He was to declare, *John* 16:13, 14. It also explains why the Lord, when He was going to leave the disciples, breathed into them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit, *John* 20:21, 22. "Breathing" means the life of faith, so that the Lord's breathing into someone means imparting the ability to understand Divine Truths and thereby receive that life. So it is also that "the Spirit," being a name derived from "breathing", is a derivation also of "blowing" and of "wind"; and this is why the spirit is frequently called the wind.