

The Mission of the Holy Spirit¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Saturday, June 7, 1862, Vigil of Pentecost

[...]

Let us spend this retreat day well, in union with the most Blessed Virgin and the apostles in the Cenacle. We have only one day, while they had ten. Although it is true that we should always be on retreat, let's make this day worth ten, by silence, solitude, and recollection, so that we will be ready for tomorrow.

Let us reflect on the mission of the Holy Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit has a mission, since he is sent. You know what is written in the Gospel, that he is sent by Jesus Christ who says, *If I do not go, the Advocate (Holy Spirit) will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you* (cf. Jn 16:7). Clearly, then, the Holy Spirit has a mission. The eternal Word has a mission as Savior, while the Holy Spirit has one as Sanctifier of souls. Alone, Jesus is not sufficient. The Father gives Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ gives himself, but it is the Holy Spirit who forms him in us. As long as the apostles had not received the Spirit, their progress was painful, and slow. After receiving him, they became new men, with the fullness of their grace.

What is the mission of the Holy Spirit us? First of all he dwells in us: *Apud vos manete et in vobis est* — (*He remains with you, and will be in you.*) (Jn 14:17). This is a permanent state; the Holy Spirit positively dwells in us. He works in the soul of the just, the faithful, and remains there because that is his goal and mission. St. Paul uses another word, because the Holy Spirit is not merely for the apostles, but is permanently in the Church: *Do you not know that you are living temples of the Holy Spirit* (cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17). The body becomes the living temple of the Holy Spirit, as he is in Jesus Christ, although differently of course. This is his dwelling place of love. While he remains there, he's not idle. What is he doing?

The primary mission of the Holy Spirit is to inspire us, to be the inspiration that reveals our Lord and makes him known to us. *Spiritus veritatis – the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father* (cf. Jn 15:26). He is sent by the Father and the Son. Therefore, he gives us his own special inspiration, sanctifying us, giving himself, working in us as he worked in the apostles, as he does in the Church, guiding us by his spirit of holiness. Our Lord resides perfectly only in the Eucharist, where he gives himself to us. Outside of that, he is the sun, the public fountain, the stream of the Eucharist, personifying himself in us, becoming our goal. But when the Holy Spirit comes to a soul, he takes control of it and inspires it. Our Lord said: *He will reveal me, and guide you to all truth* (cf. Jn 16:13-15). He is the divine inspiration of our souls.

What is his mission? To guide us. It is our duty to consult him, to place ourselves under his direction, to do nothing without him: *Docebit vos et vobis est* — (*He will teach you and be with you*) (cf. Jn 14:26). We must ask him what he wants. To do this we must be recollected. His word is within us, not outside as in past times. Although his word in the Church is a powerful and infallible word, in the soul of the just it is a gentle word, *a two-edged sword*, according to the prophet, *that penetrates even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow* (Heb 4:12). *Audi, filia et vide* — (*Hear, O daughter, and see*) (Ps 44:11). Some say that the prophet should have first said: *Vide*, since we normally see first, and then hear.

¹ Number 420. *La mission du saint Esprit.* This meditation was given both to the Religious men and to the Servants in the chapel of the Religious men.

What kind of life should we live? We have a life of grace and a life of nature. Recollection is necessary to hear the answer of the Holy Spirit, to show us the way, the proper road. The Holy Spirit is concerned with our least needs. Every good thought comes from him, such is God's attentiveness toward us and the work of divine providence in us. He cares enough to give us good thoughts; even the smallest thought is not below him. Let us not neglect listening to him and consulting him, placing ourselves at his feet. The man who consults only his reason, the man who consults only his own mind, the man who consults only the reasons of this world is on dangerous ground. Why? When he trusts his own reason, he slows his own progress, while the soul guided by the Holy Spirit makes an act of obedience and love, and acts with greater assurance and perfection. Only interior souls hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. If we do not experience the gentle action of his grace, we are not at home with ourselves; we are being flighty.

[...]

What else must we do for him to inspire us? His additional mission is to sanctify us, not merely enlightening us, but making us grow in holiness. He is the sanctifying Spirit, who explains the graces of Jesus Christ in us. This is his mission. Sterile in himself, the Holy Spirit bears fruit in our souls. He has as many children as souls to be sanctified, but he can do nothing without us. We must not merely cooperate with him, but give ourselves totally to him. Notice how an apprentice works under his master, observing him as the master uses a tool, and works with him. So, we must place ourselves under the action of his adorable will. To do this, keep in harmony with this divine action, and follow it. [...] If we do not know what he wants, how can we do it? We must consult him, and the Holy Spirit will always make known his will, his good pleasure, providing we make ourselves available to him.

God works peacefully. Peace is a proof of his reign in us (cf. Col 3:15). He may attract us to do good by an insight or something that we know to be good and beautiful. This is the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Phil 4:8). At other times, some devotion will be felt strongly, with greater warmth. The Holy Spirit comes to us with the tenderness of a mother, and we should follow him. It is not difficult to follow him when we are drawn to the heart of God. At still other times, he manifests himself through a battle. While the soul is in combat, deep down it is at peace, with the peace of God. This is a more extensive action.

What must be done? We must follow the Holy Spirit, and place ourselves at his service (cf. Gal 5:16-17). Consult him in things that are not attractive. In pleasant things human nature gets its share and self-love gets its crown. However, in the grace of sacrifice, one never goes wrong. This is God's major battle, it requires the sacrifice of heart and will.

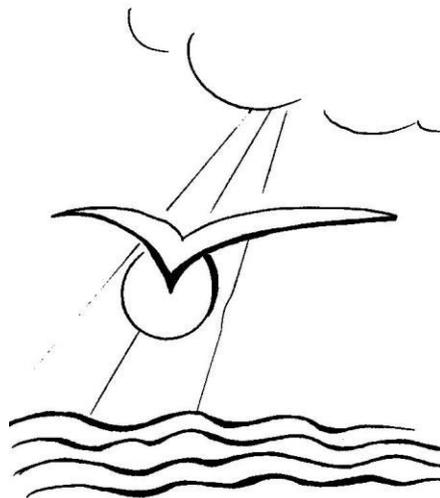
[...] Sometimes, the Holy Spirit acts quickly. A leader does not always warn his followers of a sacrifice that he will ask of them on the following day. Men do not act that way. They like to see a fidelity that struggles with self-love. The Holy Spirit will act in this way also. He may give us a premonition, since we are so weak. But occasionally, like a thunder clap, he will suddenly ask a sacrifice from a soul that is ready. Like David, a man living according to the heart of God, one must say: *Ecce nunc caepi*, behold your servant. An obedient soul easily discerns what the Holy Spirit wants of her and remains ready to respond.

What other mission does the Holy Spirit have? Not only does he show us the truth, and guide us into it (cf. Jn 16:13), but he also prays in us (cf. Rm 8:26-27), establishing in us a basic attitude of prayer and worship. St. Paul said the body is a temple: *templum Dei – [temple of God]* [Cf. 1 Cor 3:16]. In a temple, an altar is needed on which to offer the victim. If every temple must have an altar and a victim of sacrifice, what is the altar in the temple of the body? The soul. St. Gregory said: *Anima justī templum Dei – (The soul of the just is the temple of God)*. Who is the priest? The heart. [...] Human nature either desires to possess or desires to love. This is the whole of human nature.

To summarize, what is the royal sacrifice we can make? Prayer is the sacrifice of every person, as that of the priest, including the four ends of sacrifice. Priests have two goals, while the ordinary person has only one. He has only one sacrifice – himself. What is his prayer? What is the prayer of an ordinary person? [...] The sacrifice, the offering is such a small thing. What has the Church done so that the lay person, like the priest, can have the same victim? This is the work of the Holy Spirit, coming into us and forming in us the same prayer by his grace and love. This prayer becomes divine by the Holy Spirit working in us. Not only *does he pray in us*, as St. Paul says, *with inexpressible groanings – [postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus]* [Rm 8:26], he groans in us with the groanings of love and repentance. He identifies himself with us, so that we may pray with him. He forms in us a spirit of prayer, so that we might offer worship to God.

Understand clearly that we must fully unite with the prayer of the Holy Spirit. We do this by recollection and the gift of self to him, and by praying only as the Holy Spirit inspires and lifts on high. If our prayer were always pure, sending forth an incense of pleasing fragrance before the divine majesty (cf. Ps 140: 2), the Holy Spirit would joyfully exclaim, This is my son. How great will be the joy of our Lord, as well as that of the Father over having given his Son and the Holy Spirit!

Let us not allow the Holy Spirit to remain sterile within us. What must we do? Now is the time to be recollected, tomorrow especially. Let us be recollected in the Holy Spirit, since our Catholic feasts are not just commemorations, they are alive today with the same grace. It is not the apostolic Holy Spirit who comes, but the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier, forming Jesus in our souls. How fortunate we are to know the truth! We will be even happier to put it into practice (cf. Lk 11:28), and happier still to bring joy to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit by responding to and cooperating with our inner graces, by crowning so to speak the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit by our love. This is the grace I wish you. Amen.



Point for reflection:

The Holy Spirit is our interior master, the one who inspires us, and who prays and works in us. In your opinion, how can you increase his action in your life?