

The Sanctifier



Archbishop Luis M. Martinez

The Classic Work on the Holy Spirit
Unabridged Edition

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CHAPTER 7

The Holy Spirit Consecrates Us

*A*ssuredly, we might study at much greater length the marvelous action of the Holy Spirit in souls. But since it is our purpose merely to establish the dogmatic foundations for this devotion, and not to set forth now in full the beautiful and inexhaustible theology of the Holy Spirit, it will be helpful to examine these foundations as a whole before starting to build on them.

Like the traveler pitching his tent in the desert, the Holy Spirit takes possession of souls as their most sweet Guest. But unlike the traveler, who folds his tent as morning breaks, the eternal Guest stays on. The tent he pitches on the soil of our barrenness is something divine, a sketch, a reflection, of our heavenly home: grace that divinizes the soul; divine charity, the supernatural image of the Spirit who pours himself into our hearts; all the virtues and gifts. These are the conditions of his indwelling, that he may begin his work of sanctification and direct us with the strong, gentle influence of love.

His ideal is to produce Jesus in us, and through Jesus and with Jesus, to take us to the bosom of the Trinity and glorify the Father with the supreme glorification of Jesus. Through the shadows of faith we will try to get a glimpse of this divine work;

to see how, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, souls are purified, illuminated, and enkindled until they are transformed into Jesus, who is the ultimate ideal of God's love and of the aspirations of the soul, the glorious summit of the mystical ascent where we find peace and happiness: where we find God.

What is devotion to the Holy Spirit but a loving and constant cooperation with his divine influence, with his sanctifying work? To be devoted to the Holy Spirit is to open our soul for him to dwell there, to dilate our heart that he may anoint it with his divine charity, to deliver our whole being up to him that he may possess it with his gifts, to give him our life that he may transform it into a divine one, to put into his hands the shapeless block of our imperfection that he may mold it to the divine image of Jesus.

To be devoted to the Holy Spirit is to possess him and to let ourselves be loved and moved according to his good pleasure; to permit the divine Artist to destroy in us all that is opposed to his holy designs: all the bad, all the earthly, and all the humanly weak; and to let him infuse into us a new life, the marvelous participation in the life of God.

What broad and heavenly vistas spread before us if we meditate on these truths with the help of God's light!

We have seen the action of the Holy Spirit in our souls. Now we shall examine our cooperation with his wonderful influence. This cooperation must be a "consecration"—a word sometimes taken in a very superficial sense. Some think that in order to consecrate themselves to the Holy Spirit, it is enough for them to recite devoutly some prescribed prayer. The prayer may be beautiful and meaningful, but the wealth of thought and beauty it embodies will often remain unrealized; its influence will be only ephemeral and transitory. It is a good and holy thing to say the prayer provided it is said not as a mere

formula, but as a sincere expression of the promises we intend to fulfill during our whole life: provided it is truly the beginning of a new life.

When a temple is consecrated to God it is a place set apart for him alone. The greatest possible purity and solidity, the truest art, are used in its construction; and after it is magnificently ornamented, it is offered to God, to be his forever. All around the temple is the land that belongs to the children of men. The temple is the gate of heaven, the house of God; outside it one can do all that is lawful; within, one can only give glory to God.

Now the Scriptures tell us very definitely that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul says: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16).

We were consecrated to be temples of the Holy Spirit on the day of our baptism. This is clearly set down in the ritual prescribed for the administration of the sacrament: the priest breathes three times in the face of the one who is going to be baptized and says: "Go out from him, unclean spirit and give place to the Most Holy Spirit." And making the sign of the cross on the forehead and breast, he says, "Be faithful to the heavenly precepts and may your actions be such that you may now enter the temple of God." In a later exorcism, he orders the devil to go out from the creature of God whom the Lord has deigned to call "in order that he may become a temple of the living God and the Holy Spirit may dwell in him."*

Before the regenerating water is poured, the catechumen is freed from the empire of the devil and made to renounce the satanic works and pomps. Then, when his will is confirmed in

* This refers to the rite of Baptism as practiced in the author's day. The rite has been revised since Vatican II. *Ed.*

its consecration to God, he is baptized, and the Holy Spirit takes possession of his temple.

Every Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit; every Christian is consecrated to him. Nothing else may be done in that temple in which God dwells except that which will give glory to him. The Apostle St. Paul taught that even the most ordinary actions of the Christian should be done to this end: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).

Is not this the ratification of the baptismal offering, the renewal of the promises made at that time, the free and loving acceptance of the life that God infused in our souls when the Church received us into her maternal bosom? True devotion to the Holy Spirit is not something distinct from the Christian life; it *is* the Christian life—thoroughly understood, seriously practiced, and deeply enjoyed.

To be a devotee of the Holy Spirit is to comprehend the august dignity of the Christian, his holy mission, and his arduous duties that are sweetened by love. It is to establish oneself in truth, to be faithful to the sacred promises of baptism, to be what one ought to be, and then to strive for that perfection to which every Christian should aspire.

For, like all consecrations, our consecration to the Holy Spirit must be total. He is master of our whole being because of his divine sovereignty, because of our loving surrender of ourselves at baptism, and because our love gives him full possession of all that belongs to him. Infinite Love wishes to possess us totally, without anyone sharing with him. Therefore St. Paul has said: "What fellowship has light with darkness? What harmony is there between Christian and Belial? Or what part has the believer with the unbeliever? And what agreement has the tem-

ple of God with idols? For you are the temples of the living God” (2 Cor 6:14–16).

If, then, we are to belong to the Holy Spirit, all idols must be thrown out of his temple; all darkness must be dispelled in order that God’s light may shine there; all ties that bind us to Belial¹ must be destroyed; there must be separation from all that is impure and earthly. Then we may become in truth “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people”; one fit to “proclaim the perfections of him” who has called us “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

Consecration to the Holy Spirit must be total: nothing must draw us away from his loving possession. Undoubtedly vacillations and deficiencies are part of our imperfection, but even so, our love must not be extinguished. Rather, it must lift its divine flame toward infinite love in the midst of all human vicissitudes.

True devotion to the Holy Spirit, therefore, is not something superficial and intermittent, but something profound and constant, like Christian life itself. It is the love of the soul that corresponds to the love of God, the gift of the creature who tries to be grateful for the divine Gift, the human cooperation that receives the loving and efficacious action of God. As divine love is eternal, its gift without regret and its action constant, it is our part to have our heart always open to love, ready to receive the unspeakable gift, and to keep all our powers docile to the divine movement.

1. This refers to Satan. *Ed.*