

Chapter 13

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit, power of God

We have considered the first two sections of the symbol of the Apostles: the section that professes our faith in the first Divine Person as Father and Creator; and the section that develops the mystery of the Son, His Incarnation and redemption. Let us now move on to study about the third Person of the Holy Trinity, source and beginning of our sanctification.

When we talk about the Holy Spirit, we'll go back to what we mentioned at the beginning of our reflection, that the Creed was born in a baptismal context, when the Catechumen was asked whether he believed in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the oldest formula of our profession of faith with its three members, and it is indeed one of the main roots of the trinitarian image of God.

“To believe in the Holy Spirit – teaches the Catechism of the Catholic Church - is to profess that the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with the Father and the Son” (CCC 685). However, the Creed does not refer to God's inner life, but to the Holy Spirit as the power of God through which the risen Lord remains present in the history of the world as the principle of a new history and a new world¹.

This concept is in line with the gospel of Saint John, who gives us, through the discourses in the last supper, the promise Jesus makes to His disciples about sending the Holy Spirit. He talks about the gift of the Spirit after his death on the cross. Jesus must go, “For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” (Jn 16:7)

There is a close relationship between the cross of Jesus, “raised on high” and the action of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. For the disciples to be graced with the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus must first be “glorified” (cf. Jn 7:37-39).

The topic is clearly stated in the way that John narrates Jesus' death: “Aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, I thirst” (Jn 19:28-30). Jesus' thirst reminds us of the passage with the Samaritan woman at the well, where Jesus, tired, at first asks her to give him something to drink, but ends up offering her the water which will well up for eternal life, and it also reminds us of the words He pronounced at the Feast of Tabernacles, when He invites them to drink of the living water which will flow from within him (Jn 7:38).

If anybody looks closely at the texts, they'll see in the water that flows from within Christ, and flows through time, the life-giving spirit which purifies and ripens the fruit wherever it goes; it is the source of love, of a love which has been given to us, and continues being given to us, from Him flows life, true life.

¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 333

And so, the interpretation of this text does not only carry a natural meaning, but another one which can be explained with the expression “he handed over the spirit”. When His Hour came, Jesus commended his spirit into the father’s hands (Cf. Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30), but at the same time, He commended it to His disciples. From Jesus’ pierced humanity flows the Spirit of Life.

Jesus had finished His mission, and with His parting the time of the Spirit of truth was beginning, Who will testify to Jesus (Jn 15:26), so that the disciples will be guided to all truth (Jn 16:13).

The promised Spirit is the one that Jesus, at His resurrection, receives from the Father as an anointing that consecrates Him as “Anointed”, that is to say, King and High Priest (cf. Heb 2:33ab.36). It is the same Spirit which Jesus gives to His disciples on Easter Sunday, when He breathes on them (Cf. Jn 20:22). From that time on, the mission of Christ and of the Spirit becomes the mission of the Church: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21; cf. Mt 28:19; Lk 24:47-48; Acts 1:8)².

With the irruption of the Holy Spirit, poured forth by Jesus over the Apostles, the Church is born. (Cf Acts 2:33). The prayer of Jesus to the Father - I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always” (Jn 14:16) – has been granted, because the Father always hears Him.

After this, the Holy Spirit will be with the disciples, will stay with them, will teach them everything, will remind them everything Christ had said, and will **testify** to Him; he will lead them to all truth and will glorify Christ. As for the world, He will accuse it of sins, justice and judgement (Cf. Jn 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:7-15; 17:26).

The Holy Spirit is fire, love, purity, clarity, light of heaven and earth which illumines minds, enkindles hearts; He can transform those who let themselves be taken over by Him into an immaculate source of light. His action on the disciples will make the “exterior” figure of Christ become their “interior” and vital figure, to the point that they are able to exclaim with St Paul: “yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). The Spirit drives the believer to make Jesus’ journey his own, in a personal way through faith and following.

On the living Cross of the Apostolate

We’ll try now to establish a relationship between the doctrine expressed in the Creed and the mystical experience symbolized in the Cross of the Apostolate. We find the same teachings in both approaches, but expressed and lived differently. We can see a manifestation of this experience of the Spirit in the following text from Concepcion Cabrera:

The Spirit of the Lord walks triumphantly over the chaos of all created things, to pour down light, life and beauty; but His only resting place is the Cross, because it is only on it that the fullness of His divine wish comes to be; it is only on it that He finds anxiety fulfilled; His infinite love. In the beautiful symbolism of the Cross of the Apostolate, the Dove who

² Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 728-730

hovers over the Cross means not only that the Holy Spirit is the inspiration for Jesus' sacrifice, but that the Holy Spirit rests in Jesus.

Because Cross is not just the one that was raised at Calvary, but also the one which is raised in our hearts invisibly, so the Spirit also rests in our hearts, when he mystically renews Jesus' sacrifice, and His rest is much sweeter the deeper the souls penetrate in the mystery; the better they identify themselves with the blessed Cross, and so they bathe in its unending light more fully (AC 62, 314: 8/31/1934).

In this chapter, we won't discuss the image of the Cross in its graphic depiction, rather as an existential experience in Concepcion Cabrera. We have said it before, she was a Living Cross of the Apostolate, bathed with the light of the Holy Spirit, and we should value her testimony as that of someone who has lived intensely her relationship with God.

“The saints – says Benedict XVI – are oases around which life sprouts up and something of the lost paradise returns. And ultimately, Christ himself is always the well-spring who pours himself forth in such abundance”.³

This is how Concepcion lived. She embraced the Cross, set her gaze on Jesus' side and from there she drank the water of God's love, there she found the direction for her living and her loving. She became for the Church a woman and mother “fountain from where rivers of living water flow”, because she came to drink always from the first and original source, Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart love flows.

Indeed, whoever drinks from the water Christ offers becomes another Jesus. The believer becomes one with Jesus and partakes also of His fruitfulness. The believer who loves with Christ becomes a life-giving well spring.

The spiritual experience of Concepcion Cabrera shows us this way of life through the symbolism in the Cross of Christ. The Holy Spirit, hovering over the Cross, penetrates in Concepcion's soul during her process of transformation into Christ. She then feels “unspeakable sensations” and she hears the interior voice of Jesus telling her:

“You have seen the Holy Spirit with His wings extended, as if protecting or embracing the immeasurable concentration of different lights: the whitest light you saw was the center of my cross, the place where my heart rests. My whole cross is light and fire; it illumines and keeps you warm. Let a dove be placed above the cross, with its wings extended, and with rays of light coming out of its beak. It could also be like in a disc of light. So that the rays of light it has do not get confused with the fire of the heart, they can go underneath the cross, around the heart, forming a great clarity that flows out in rays. (AC 2, 3-4)

The Holy Spirit, who at baptism descended upon Jesus, and who we now see above the symbol of the Cross of the Apostolate, has the power to sensitize the Christian faithful to hear

³ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 248

Jesus' freeing action which took place on the Cross. The Spirit leads us to the whole Truth, Jesus Himself; the Spirit remembers what Christ has done and taught; He leads us into Jesus' heart where the Spirit has made His dwelling. He is the "Spirit of Christ" (Rm 8:9), He is the "Spirit of the Lord" (2Cor 3:17; Phil 1:19), "the Spirit of the Son" (Gal 4:6), who has the historic mission of guiding us to Jesus and in this way transform us into a living cross of the Apostolate.

This is why the testimony Concepcion gives us of her own experience is not too strange: the rays of light which emanate from the Holy Spirit did not stop at the cross, rather they covered her (Concepcion) and penetrated into the deepest parts of her soul. Those rays that came from high above reached her and enveloped her (Cf. AC 2,3). Those same rays of light which bathe the symbol of the Cross penetrate now Concepcion's intelligence and soul, enkindling and enlightening her (Cf. *Life*, 1, 267)⁴.

The material light, says she, is only a small ray of His power, but the divine light, the light of grace, his light, is divine essence itself. There cannot exist even a small speck of darkness there. That divine sun can never hide itself, the Holy Spirit being its focus, since the Spirit is the very substance of Light.⁵

The encounter with Jesus happens within the scope of the light that envelops the Cross. There, the Spirit, "drawing" the image of Jesus in Concepcion's interior, was transforming her into a living memory of Christ, making of her one body with Christ (Cf. 1Cor 12,13).

Concepcion is the Cross of the Apostolate where the heart of Jesus is mystically incarnated. This Cross represents her spiritual journey in four stages: she accepted Jesus' cross, felt the love of His priestly heart, shared the feelings of Jesus as symbolized by the small internal cross, and ascended to the union of love in the Holy Spirit.

In one of her published works, she places on Jesus' lips these words addressed to all believers. "Love, my child, with all your strength, with all the kindness, tenderness and intimacy of love, love the Holy Spirit who rules us through love"⁶. Concepcion could feel the Holy Spirit within her. She was able to experience His divine possession and His fruits in the most intimate part of her being.

He envelops me in an environment of heavenly calm, profound silence, complete emptiness, things all He needs to communicate, Indeed, in this very quiet darkness of the soul, He radiates His splendors. Here, in this profound silence, He makes His groanings, His lullabies, His sweetest voice, all harmony, all peace. O Holy Spirit! How much I love you, and how I wish the whole world know and love you. You, You are the one who infuses the soul with the desire for sacrifice.

⁴ "Look, Jesus told me: this dove represents the Holy Spirit, and those rays you see reach the depths of the intelligence and hearts; because they are light and fire, both things: they enlighten and enkindle". Father, I am ashamed to say, but those rays came from high above, they reached me and enveloped me (AC 2,3)

⁵ C. Cabrera, *Come O Holy Spirit*, (361-365 in the Spanish edition)

⁶ C. Cabrera, *What Jesus is like*, (pg 31-42 in the Spanish edition)

Jesus Christ receives admiration, gratitude, but it is You who infuses in us the courage to imitate Him, to be crucified with Him. This is why you show yourself above the cross, to infuse in us the energy to nail ourselves to the cross. What would become of the world without Your influence, Your warmth, Your light and Your strength?

The Holy Spirit incarnates the Word in souls, sanctifying them with all virtues, enriching them with gifts and graces, until they are transformed into Jesus, with the only goal of glorifying the Father in them, contemplating His divine Son etched in them, alive, and beating, where He finds His delights (Cf AC 55, 216: May 31, 1930)

We bring this topic to a conclusion, through the invitation to turn our gaze towards the cross when we reflect about the motion of the Holy Spirit in man's interior, and with Concepcion's spiritual experience. But not to the cross we contemplate outside of us, but the one which is inside us, a cross of the apostolate where Jesus can become spiritually incarnate, by the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of the Father and the salvation of mankind. It is an exhortation to offer our life to God, and give it to our brothers, truthfully saying "this is my body, this is my blood". In this way we can fulfill a wish Concepcion stated like this:

Let us worship the Holy Spirit...; may we foster His devotion in all souls, may He be invoked, may He be called and He will change the material world into a spiritual one (AC7, 306-307: Aug 29, 1896).

And she continues:

He told me to remember that the Cross of the Apostolate presented itself the very first time within the light of the Holy Spirit, and that the fruits of the Cross are the fruits of the Holy Spirit, ripened by his warmth. This is why the Cross of the Apostolate, sheltered and protected by this beloved Dove, contains within it the fruits of this divine Spirit.

At this moment we can see how the action of the Holy Spirit is performed in the interior of each heart, and in general inside every person who is part of the mystical body of Christ, that is to say, His Church. We'll discuss this topic further in the remaining articles of the Symbol of the Apostles.