

Chapter 8CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Following the line of the Symbol of the Apostles that we find in Benedict XVI's *Introduction to Christianity*, we approach the topic of the incarnation of the Word performed by the power of the Holy Spirit in the person of Mary. The goal of this reflection is to situate the Cross of the Apostolate in the context of our profession of faith.

The expression in the Creed *was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary*, explains the human-divine origin of Jesus. The statement refers to Mary, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus. Jesus is the subject of the two phrases: He was conceived, He was born. The agents for the fulfillment of this central event in the history of salvation are the Holy Spirit and Mary; the Holy Spirit indicates the origin of Jesus, His divine being; and Mary manifests the way that God introduced Him into our history. The article combines the divinity of Jesus with His human nature.

Given the scope of this statement from the Creed, we will first consider the expression *conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit*, leaving for the following chapter that which refers to Mary's role in the incarnation of the Word. We will make the reflection from the point of view of biblical theology, also taking into account the scope of the spiritual experience.

By the power of the Holy Spirit

The announcement of the angel to Joseph "For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her" indicates that what happened within Mary is a new creation. God who called forth being out of nothing, makes a new beginning amid humanity. The spirit of God who in the beginning hovered over the waters and shaped chaos into cosmos (Gn. 1:2) is the Divine power of creation; when He is sent, living beings are created (Ps. 104:30). And so, the announcement from the angel to Mary: "the holy Spirit will come upon you", is the proof that the child which Mary will bear is the creating Word of God made flesh in humanity.¹

With the incarnation of the Son of God a truth presented along the history of revelation becomes real, mainly that God is not a prisoner of His own eternity, not limited to the solely spiritual, but that He is capable of operating here and now, in my world, and that He did operate in it through Jesus, the new man born of the Virgin Mary. With Jesus God enters into the history of humanity forever. God is now already one of us, because the Word of God is not just a word that we accept, but flesh of our flesh.

¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 272

The translation in the passive voice “*the Word was made flesh*” that we read in the gospel of John underlines the new and humble condition in which the Word has been established, He who had made all: “*without him nothing came to be*” (Jn. 1:3). The term “*flesh*” applies to the whole man, but in his condition of weakness and mortality.

The divine being of Jesus

The fourth gospel emphasizes again that the origin of Jesus is “the Father”, that Jesus comes from Him and that this origin is completely different to that of all the other divine messengers. Contrary to the prophets who preceded Him, Jesus not only received the Spirit of God in order to proclaim the word, rather He is moved by the Spirit and this is why He is the culmination of all the prophets; for He not only proclaims the word, He himself is the Word.

Theology explains the conception of Jesus as God’s new creation. That is to say, Jesus is not the fruit of a generation since God is not the biological father of Jesus. Jesus’ being-from-God is not explained in the sense of biological generation but on the plane of the divine being and its eternity². This means that in Jesus, the Word of God – who from eternity belongs by His being to the triune relationship, has assumed human nature.³

In other words, Jesus’ Divine Sonship does not rest on the fact that Jesus had no human father; because this is not a biological fact, rather it is an ontological fact; an event not in time, but in God’s eternity.

“Jesus, son of Adam, son of God”

By being conceived in the womb of the Virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus becomes the beginning of a new creation, a new way of life. He is “the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15). This is why Jesus’ existence concerns not only His own individuality, but all mankind. The New Testament makes this perceptible by calling Him an “Adam”. This word expresses the unity of the whole creature “man”, so that one can speak of the biblical idea of a “corporate personality”. So if Jesus is called “Adam”, this implies that he is intended to gather the whole creature “Adam” in Himself. The new Adam includes everyone. (cf. Jn 12:32)⁴

Therefore, Jesus is the man in whom –on the biological plane – the next evolutionary leap, as it were, has been accomplished; He is the man in whom personalization and socialization no longer exclude each other but support each other, He is the man in whom perfect unity and perfect individuality are one. Hence, the unity of humankind is called by St Paul “the body of Christ” (Gal 3:38).

² Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 275

³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 275

⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 236

Indeed, in Jesus we see the man in whom humanity comes into contact with its future because through Him it makes contact with God Himself, shares in Him, and thus realizes its most intrinsic potential.⁵

Without the Word made flesh, man would be worth nothing; Concepcion Cabrera de Armida believes such:

God sent His Word to the Earth in order that, taking flesh, he would take on a human nature without forsaking the divine, and with this divinity He would give value and merit to the works, love and sacrifices of man. Without the Word made flesh, man would be worth nothing; his acts would be dead; with Him, the world received light and the souls met in Him the way to heaven. His blood purified the earth and opened heaven for us (AC 60, 23-24; March 20, 1933).

The Incarnation, a work of the love of God

The mystery of the incarnation of the Word, explained by theological reflection as work of the Holy Spirit, is perceived existentially by privileged people who have an intimate contact with God and who share their experience through the testimony of their life, with their word, with their work; using the language of symbols.

In the case we are concerned with, the spiritual experience of Concepcion Cabrera – as it is reflected in the Cross of the Apostolate - contemplates the mystery of the incarnation of the Word as a work of the love of the Trinity in which the three Divine Persons take part:

During morning prayer I gave thanks to the Father with all my soul, because He *allowed* and desired this incarnation of the Word, to the Son because he *approved* of it out of the love for His Father and to the Holy Spirit because *He worked it* with His pure shadow and eternal fecundity. To the blessed Trinity because in His infinite charity God loved the world and manifested His power, taking pity on us, procuring and bringing about the reparation and forgiveness that opened heaven to us.

Through the veil of spiritual language, the Cross of the Apostolate can be found far in the background; in it you can contemplate the Spirit of God that touches the Heart of Christ. This contact can be interpreted as a fertilization of love, a love that also envelops the wood of the cross, a wood that symbolizes the weak man, in order to grow in him and transform his pain into love.

The work of the incarnation is the work of love and only of love; this is why the Holy Spirit works it. He does not produce the Word who is a divine person distinct from Him; He

⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 239

produces the love in the Word which induces Him to work in the souls, to unite Himself to them and even more, to be incarnate, to live and to grow in them, not as man or as Word, but in graces (AC 23,39-43; July 10, 1906).

In the incarnation of the Word the divine love is expressed in an awe-inspiring way, in the way of “spiritual incarnation” in the heart of man:

The Holy Spirit makes the Word incarnate in souls, sanctifying them with virtues, enriching them with gifts and graces, until He transforms them into Jesus, with the only goal of glorifying the Father in them, contemplating in the divine Son portrayed in them, alive and beating there where He is well pleased (AC 55, 216; May 31, 1930).

The Holy Spirit on the Cross of the Apostolate

The presence of the Holy Spirit on the Cross of the Apostolate is interpreted in light of His actions in the historical events of the life of Jesus: His incarnation, His miracles - signs of the power of the Holy Spirit - His intervention in the passion of Jesus and in His Baptism.

The gospels report how, by the power of the Spirit, the Son of God became man. Matthew and Luke, as we indicated, explain the origin of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit: He who has been begotten in Mary is through the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 1:18, 20). This is why He who is born of Mary is Holy, the Son of God (cf. Lk. 1:35).

The New Testament speaks several times about this joint action which unites the mission of the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit and the Son have an active role in the salvation of mankind. There is one difference in their expressions: the work of the Son constitutes a historical event, visible, we all can perceive manifestations of His work; on the contrary, the mission of the Holy Spirit takes place in the interior of the human being and therefore it is invisible.

Saint Paul explains it like this: The Holy Spirit proves to us that we are children of God *in the interior* of our hearts, and from there He cries out *Abba*, which means Father; on the other hand St Paul speaks of the visible mission of the Son in the fullness of time, with the same mission as that of the Spirit: to make us adoptive children of God (cf. Gal 4: 4-6).

The symbol of the Cross of the Apostolate brings to mind the Son and the Spirit in the event at the Jordan river. There the Holy Spirit descends over Jesus and bestows on Him His prophetic mission. In a similar way, we can see the Holy Spirit on the Cross of the Apostolate in the shape of a dove with his wings outstretched, in a tremendous frame of burning light whose rays of gold and fire are lighter toward the center (cf. Ap. of the Cross. 1:1a). After Concepcion had the vision of the Spirit of God, she had another vision of a cross on which the Dove, full of light, was resting, and the Dove invaded with His rays the heart of Christ positioned in the center of the cross.

The reference to the event of the Baptism of Jesus is clear. The humanity that the Son assumes is “anointed by the Holy Spirit”. Jesus is made “Christ” by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 4:18-19, Is 61:1). Jesus Himself attests to this anointing in the synagogue at Nazareth: “The Spirit was over me because he has anointed me” (Lk. 4:18).

Thus, the same Spirit, who manifested Himself in the shape of a dove at the baptism of Christ, comes down now and rests on the Cross of the Apostolate. The rays of light that gush forth from the Spirit reach the center of the cross, so that He can prepare His nest there, in the interior of the heart of Christ. The image of the “nest” does not appear visually because the vision presents only an instant of the revelation, and this revelation is not static but always evolving.

The nest on the wooden cross, this cross which is a symbol of man in his sorrowful dimension, is the symbol of the believer’s heart, a believer who has been inhabited by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit makes His nest inside our hearts so He can transform us in a living Cross of the Apostolate, on which the heart of Christ rests (cf. AC 6,72: June 1895).

Just as in the Jordan heaven was torn open and the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove over the Son in whom the Father is well pleased (cf. Mk 1:10), just so the luminous clouds that envelop the Cross of the Apostolate, and the voice coming from heaven, are the expression of the presence of the invisible Father, and the dove is the visible symbol of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was anointed by the Father with the unction of the Spirit (cf. Mt 3:17, Ac 10:38).

The anointing of Jesus with the Spirit is represented in the Cross of the Apostolate through the rays of light that touch the heart. It is an unction of light for the salvation of mankind, and we can almost hear Concepcion’s ardent cry: “Jesus savior of mankind, save them”.

The live and beating heart of Christ rests also on the cross of man in order to give him life. There, as in the passion narrative, Jesus performs His work of salvation. Man, moved by the power of the Spirit, unites himself to Christ in order to make the offering of his life to the Father: “through the eternal Spirit I offered myself to God” (Heb 9:14; cf. Rm 1:4; 8:11, Phil 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 3:16).

We can summarize what we’ve said so far in the following way: The rays of light which emanate from the Dove and touch the Heart on the Cross of the Apostolate symbolically represent the mystery of the incarnation performed by the power of the Holy Spirit; they are also a manifestation of the essential relationship of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity with the person of the Word incarnate, invoking, at the same time, the event of the baptism of Jesus and His oblation

on the cross⁶, and also the anointing of the Spirit who raises Jesus from the dead, and establishes Him as “Lord”.

Another aspect of the action of the Holy Spirit is His reign in the heart of the believer in such a way that the believer becomes able to penetrate into the meaning of the cross of Christ. Concepcion has an expression about the action of the Holy Spirit in the Cross of the Apostolate, as the purifying fire that Christ has come to bring to earth:

To the extent that the Holy Spirit reigns, the sensualism that floods the earth will be destroyed; and the cross will not take roots if the Holy Spirit does not first prepare the soil. This is why He (the Holy Spirit) appeared in your vision before the cross; this is why He presides over the Cross of the Apostolate (AC 35:71-72: February 19, 1911).

Having considered the actions of the Holy Spirit in the mystery of the incarnation, let us now explore the role of the Virgin Mary in the conception of the Son of God.

⁶ Jesus receives the Spirit in the virginal conception of Mary, at His baptism, in the works and days of His life until His glorious resurrection, Jesus appears as the anointed with the Spirit, the Messiah, the Christ (cf. Mt 1:18-20; Mk 1:10,12; Lk 4:14,18).