

THE SPIRIT OF GOD - THE HOLY SPIRIT

BY

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The Spirit of God - The Holy Spirit

Oh, sweet burn! Oh, delectable wound! Oh, soft hand! Oh, delicate touch That savors of eternal life and pays every debt! In slaying, thou hast changed death into life.¹ *Living flame.*

Every Carmelite is familiar with these words. Who of us here can deny that these words set our hearts on fire? ~~When you reflect on these words~~, don't you want to yell to the top of your voice, "Great God I love You so!" I know I do. My heart is filled with wonder and amazement when I think of a God who loves me so. We, here at Carmel are some of the most blessed people in the world.

"Oh Living Flame Of Love". Here John³ Our Holy Father is speaking of a deep relationship between the Holy Spirit and our soul.

This burn ~~John is speaking of~~ is the Holy Spirit; the "Hand" is the Father; and the "touch" is the Son. These three Persons, in one God are said to act together and separately in and on our soul in some holy and mysterious manner. Each brings His own special gifts and graces making us holy by transforming us with the fire of His love.

The Living Flame of Love, comes to us through the Son. Let us not forget what Christ said, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and the Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him." (John 14: 23) So we here at Carmel are about one thing only, loving God. The only excessive act we are guilty of is giving ourselves totally to Our Lord ^{WITH MARY, OUR MOTHER} ~~This is why~~ the Son has sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts and we cry out constantly "Abba Father" -- "daddy".

This fire of love has infinite power³, one of ~~the~~ ^{its} greatest powers ~~this~~ ~~consuming fire has~~ is to transform into itself that which it touches. The ability to strengthen us is not left to the Spirit of God alone, we must do all we can to prepare ourselves to receive and cooperate with ~~the~~ God's grace. As Carmelites,

¹Living Flame of Love: St. John of the Cross. Allison Press. Triumph Books, p. 40

our first means of preparation is prayer. Prayer brings us closer to God. The very fact that we desire to pray is in itself a gift of the Spirit of God working in us to draw us closer to Himself.

Our capacity for God and to love God is endless. This capacity cannot be realized unless we Carmelites are willing to totally give ourselves to God through the Spirit just as Jesus was willing to love without bounds. We are to seek the many faces of God in our daily lives whether He comes to us through those we come in contact with or whether we are confronted with our own imperfections and faults. But all of these playings of the Spirit of God, this fire are only intended to make us love more.²

Oh sweet burn -- the Spirit of God touches the soul and it gives thanks to God for it trusts in God alone and faith leads us to believe that it is God who permits all things to happen.

"The Holy Spirit is a living breath, that brings to pass the glorious vibrations of His flame and increases the odors of the fire that consumes the soul."³ But the soul is not totally passive -- just surrendering and receiving God's inspirations is an ^{POSITIVE} active act for the soul. And without this surrender, the Spirit of God could not be at work within us. When God gave us a free will, He placed restrictions upon Himself as only He can. He will not bestow upon us, under certain circumstances, gifts without our permission.

When the Spirit of God acts on the contemplative soul, often the memory and the imagination ^{ARE} bypassed. This is necessary because if the Holy Spirit worked through the memory and the imagination, we may become attached to these figures and images and they would become a hinderance to our loving the Father of gifts and we ^{MAY} ~~would~~ become attached to the gifts. So the Spirit avoids these barriers. The imagination cannot give us true knowledge of God except in a vague confused way.

²Open Mind Open Heart, Thomas Keating, p. 57

³I Am A Daughter of the Church: Vol. 2, Fider Publishers, p. 586.

It is the Spirit that deepens our yearning for God and help us imitate Christ. We Carmelites are filled with so much love that we become like Mary, Mother of God, we are transformed into God's sanctuary. And like her, we want our life to be one perpetual act of adoration and thanksgiving. This happens in the highest degree of love when we become aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in us. We here at Carmel, understand that being God's dwelling place here on earth is brought about by our constant love and surrender. Every time we make the sign of the cross we acknowledge that the Spirit of God is working in our soul. We realize also our inability to praise God adequately so we unite with the Spirit of Jesus who alone can render to God that glory which by right is his. The Spirit also helps us in our infirmity: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit himself ask for us with unspeakable groaning.⁴

The Spirit of God will lead us to imitate the Holy Trinity in the measure which is compatible with our growth and weakness. We are the adopted children of a loving God and living temples of the Holy Spirit and because of this we can better appreciate why we must not violate these temples which ~~is~~ ARE within.

If we are generous with God and yield to the promptings of the Spirit, this is a powerful motive for us to turn away from sin and overcome our imperfections and aid us in the practice of virtue. Our Lord wished to propose to us an ideal, a model of perfection. He pointed to God Himself, "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Mat 5:48) At first, this ideal might seem to be too high but when we recall that we are adopted children of God and that He lives in us; in order to impress upon us His image and to collaborate in our salvation, then we realize that a high rank imposes obligations and that it is no more than our plain duty to approach ever nearer the divine perfection.

The Three Divine Persons inhabit the sanctuary of our soul, taking their

⁴Romans 8:26

delight in enriching it with supernatural gifts and in communicating to us a God like life similar to theirs except ours is not one by nature but by grace.⁵

Oh, happy wound, inflicted by One who cannot but heal. This burning that is experienced by the soul is ^{THE} purging of our faults. This is a burning of all that is capable of being burned. The Spirit of God destroys all that we will not or cannot destroy. Those secret attachments that prevent us from loving God completely. God calls each of us by a different way. The way chosen uniquely and individually (Spiritual Life, p. 75). It is for us to discern (by the light of the Holy Spirit) our way and follow it to the best of our ability, neither complaining that others have an easier way, nor that we were not chosen for greater deeds. For God who created each individual soul, knows exactly what we are able to bear. We Carmelites must be willing to cooperate, and this is where the offering of ourselves is necessary ~~for~~ ^{for} it transforms every deed, every word, even every thought. There is no aspect of our life that we can hold on to for ourselves if we are totally committed to God, in Christ.

We, here at Carmel, realize that God who is infinite power and love, set our souls on fire with His love. This burn is so sweet that it cannot be expressed in words. This burning is intended to bear our souls to the love of God from which nothing can be hidden.

The Spirit of God, this burning love, that fill the soul and flood it with wisdom, which enters through love and mortification. It is great wisdom to know how to be silent and to look at neither the remarks, nor the deeds, nor the lives of others with contempt. As we avoid not observing the imperfections of others, which may cause great pain, and in this we mortify ourselves if by preserving silence and a continual communion with the Holy Spirit we will eradicate great imperfections from our souls and become possessors of great virtues.

Although this silencing of our inordinate desires and the habitual practicing of the virtues is primarily dependent on the graces that come to us

⁵Tanqueray, The Spiritual Life. Derclee Co., p. 55

from the Spirit of God through Jesus Christ, it is also necessary for us to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This active silencing is a natural operation of the soul. Our efforts are rewarded only if we cooperate with God's grace. This fire that John of the Cross is speaking of, this fire of the Holy Spirit though it would consume a thousand worlds more easily than natural fire consumes dry straw, it does not consume our spirits wherein it burns, neither does it destroy; but rather it deifies making us more like God, who by grace, have made us His children. For Paul said, "We are children of God."

"Oh, sweet burn", this transforming fire is at work in us, lifting us to a new level of consciousness and the higher we are raised, the more we see things as God sees them. We want to do everything to please our Lord, we want to truly be his children.

"Oh delectable wound" the Spirit of God sets the soul on fire. This transformation of love inflicts our soul with a desire to love and serve God. The fruit of the Spirit, at this stage, we Carmelites, realize is the possession of God through the union of love. By this the Carmelite advances in supernatural charity. God is acting more completely on the soul and it is receiving great favors from God. It is receiving manifestations of new truths.

Sometimes God permits us to feel his love for us and our love for Him but not always. From a song I have heard often is one we Carmelites pray, "Let your light shine through me - showing me the things I've never seen before." We are asking the Holy Spirit to show us those hidden graces and the depths of love that are hidden within each of us. The Spirit of God longs to reveal so much to us but it is we who put up the barriers. We must eradicate those things in our life that prevent God's love from exploding within us, sending his graces into every fiber of our being. So that when we say we want to imitate Christ, we mean that we want to talk like Christ, love like Christ, forgive like Christ, think like Christ. ~~So~~ when we ask to be like Christ perhaps we have not thought out completely and fully what this means and what the implications are. So let us pray that the Spirit of Divine love unleash this sea of fire within us so that this love might reach the farthest heights and depths of our being.

The divine burn eradicates from our soul all of its attachments, to sin and replaces a deep longing for God and a desire to serve Him completely. This is how God "heals the ^{wound} ~~wound~~ which has been inflicted in our soul by love, " and when the soul is wholly dissolved in the wound of love - it is transformed in love.

These wounds of love is God playing with the soul, His sweet caresses, His loving touches. These playful touches make us long for God. Both God and the Carmelite fan the sparks of love until it bursts into that transforming flame. "This burn and this wound," John tells us represent the highest degree of love to which the soul can attain. ~~This fire of love, this acting on our soul which the Spirit of God is without any form or figure, by this I mean we cannot explain to ourselves or to others what is happening or what has happened to us.~~ So each of us experiences God in a dark, general way and on different levels depending on how advanced we are in our spiritual life.

God bestows no favors upon the body without bestowing them first and principally upon the soul. If the effect of the wound should sometimes be permitted to show itself in the bodily senses, in a way corresponding to the soul's interior, the effect of the impact and the wound would be felt without; as for example the soul of St. Frances of Assisi was wounded by the Seraph and in this case, the effect of the wounds became outwardly visible. *WE CAN EXPECT OUR EXPERIENCES TO BE LESS DRAMATIC.*

So this whole work, the discoveries and the increases in desire is the work of the Holy Spirit. ~~They are the playing and the ruses of His love.~~ They prepare us for the coming of the spouse, ^{adorning} ~~adorning~~ his dwelling place with virtue and desire.

The Divine Spouse Himself has sent before Him the Holy Spirit. It is He who communicates to the soul His flames producing in ^{US} ~~it~~ the wounds and burnings to love. He causes ^{US} ~~it~~ to realize perfectly the divine operations for which ~~it has~~ ^{we have} the capacity in the plenitude of its grace.

^{Breathes} ~~God~~ ^{IN US} ~~Breathing~~ with ^{God He} ~~that His~~ Divine breath ^{He} ~~He~~ raises the soul most sublimely and ^{TRANSFORMS} ~~informs~~ her, that she may be ^{to GOD} ~~breathe in God~~ the same breath of love that the Father breathes in the Son and the Son in the Father, which is the Holy

^{breath}
Spirit that ~~breathes into her the same transforming spirit.~~⁶

During this transforming union, the Spirit of Love has given everything to the soul with all His treasures. He belongs to the soul as the soul belongs to Him. This would not be a true transformation if the soul were not united and transformed in the Holy Spirit.

Oh, delicate touch, ^{The} ~~Thou~~ Word, ^{the} ~~the~~ Son of God, which gently stir our soul to do your will. Your gentleness prod, push, lead, urge us on for "your yoke is easy and your burden is light." You never forget our weakness as you lead us toward yourself. We may long to run but you make our steps slow and laborious lest we fall because you know the dangers where our ambition can lead us. ~~How gentle God is to our weak soul. When he is so terrible and powerful.~~ God is gentle with us who seek His love and strive to serve Him but terrible to the obstinate sinner who refuses to listen to the stirring in the depths of the soul. So it is we at Carmel who are so blessed by so gentle a God.

Because of God's gentleness and His love for us, He hides us in the hiding place of His presence which is His Son, and our God conceals us from many ~~eyes of~~ others who would do us harm. ~~God~~ ^{He} does this gentle hiding in order to draw us more closely to Himself because He wills that we belong entirely to Himself. This gentleness of God makes touches of the world, the flesh and the devil seem rude and gross. For we seek not to offend Him whom we love. The touch of God is so delicate and tender we are not aware that we have been touched by His love except when we think back on the day we are amazed that our life has been less stressful, that we were more kind and patient to our mate, our children, and to others we interacted with, even those who ~~at other times~~ might have been a source of annoyance for us.

This delicate touch of the Spirit of God instills in our soul that desire for perfect love. This desire is clearly a longing to know in the deepest, fullest, closest sense, ^{ONE} ~~the thing~~ adored. This gentle touch is love's characteristic activity for love, all wings, is inherently active, and cannot be lazy, - is a quest, an

⁶Spiritual Canticle 38, Peers II, 168 and I Am a Daughter of the Church, p. 592.

outgoing towards an object desired, which only when possessed will be ~~only~~ known and only when fully known (we call this the beautiful vision) can be perfectly adored.⁷ As Carmelites we must not be discouraged if and when we experience, "a dry, empty feeling, yearning is also part and parcel of this, - "gentle touch of the Spirit of God. From the depths of the wilderness the psalmist cries out to Yahweh that he is pining and thirsting for Him, that his flesh is longing as a parched desert, lifeless and waterless; he longs to gaze upon his Lord and to experience His power and glory, a perfect and appealing description of what it is like to have grown in prayer to this point of a strong yearning for God. We at Carmel realize that this longing for God is contemplative prayer. It is praying without words or symbols and without use of the memory or imagination. And we can read ⁱⁿ many places in the Bible where the prophets experienced this kind of prayer. This we realize also is a purifying prayer, purging the soul of its faults and imperfections. But with this purifying longing is associated ^{an} ~~with it self~~ awareness of our faults. Much of the purging is done in secret. ~~We don't realize that it is happening~~ - then there is some ~~purging where~~ we are conscious of the struggle. This yearning may be short in terms of minutes or long in terms of days and even years; there is much fluctuating. "This of course is a normal development of our prayer life. ~~this~~ ^{this} gentle touch is the experience of God's presence either after the manner of a peaceful, general, loving attention or a dry reaching out for him. God gradually captures the inner faculties - ~~by that means~~ our memory imaginations and our will. This deepening communion with the in dwelling Trinity brings with it a steady progressive growth in holiness: humility, love, patience, purity fortitude and all the virtues".⁸

Again and again we may observe ourselves relying and depending on our nature - now in the sense of minimizing our defects in the spirit of optimism,

⁷Underhill, Evelyn, *Mysticism*. p. 46

⁸DuBay, Thomas, *Fire Within*. p. 68.

now in that we are moved to helpless despair when our infirmities reveal themselves - a sure indication that we have not yet acquired true confidence in God, that we have not yet transported the center of our personality into ^{THE} supernatural and are still clinging, as it were, to our native selfhood. Otherwise, in ~~in~~ spite of the pain due to our awareness of being still so far removed from God, we should be filled with joy because we have come to know ourselves better ^{and to be} ~~get~~ rid of our illusions about our character. The very fact ~~of~~ ^{IS} our being ^{more} deeply pervaded by the light of truth renders us more closely attached to God. We must realize that we ~~must~~ ^{SHOULD} expect nothing from our nature. The abyss of our faults, the immense distance that still separates us from the perfection which God has set before us as our goal - they may well prompt us to say, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us." (Tob. 8:10) Yet they must never cause us to lose heart. Rather, we must say again, with David: "Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow" and believe firmly that the mercy of God is greater than all the vastness of our weakness and infidelity.

Even in ~~the~~ ^{the} state of ~~mortal~~ sin and though we have cut ourselves away from God, we should not for a moment ~~flee from God nor~~ yield to the temptation of doubting either His omnipotence or His mercy. We are to fall down before Him in penitence, and to flee into his merciful arms, ^{IN THE CONFESSIONAL} ~~in~~ his merciful arms. ^{OUR} ~~AS~~ Much as ~~his~~ ^{US} ever recurrent backsliding may depress ~~him~~, ^{MUST} he ~~will~~ seek ^{GOD IN SPITE OF} ~~their cause in himself alone, in his own~~ weakness and lack of zeal, and at the same time thank God for ^{OUR} ~~his~~ humiliation to which ^{WE OWE FOR} ~~he owes~~ a clear consciousness ^{of our} to ~~his~~ weakness. How ^{CAN WE} ~~could~~ he judge on ^{our} ~~his~~ own authority what God means ~~thereby~~ ^{US} to convey to ~~him~~. Even in these disappointments, ^{WE SHOULD} ~~he will~~ humbly look for the traces of God's love, and abide by the words of Paul: "For I know in whom I have believed". (2 Tim 1:12) Aware of the untiring mercy of God, full of confidence he will again and again ~~begin anew~~ ^{FORGIVE US.}

"God has given the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:32)

Exalted to the right hand of God, ^{CHRIST SENT} ~~he~~ has ~~received~~ from the Father the promised Holy Spirit ~~and has paused at what you now see and hear.~~
^{To help us in every way.}

God the Son was made human ^{and} ~~or~~ ^{A.} become incarnate by the Holy Spirit.⁹

The incarnation is a work of the triune God, the Son being sent by the Father by the power of the Spirit.

The Father willed the Son's coming, and the Spirit enabled the conception. The Father prepared the body for the Son, the Son assumed it and the Spirit conceived and enabled it. The whole nature of humanity was taken up by God the Son • By the Holy Spirit there was granted to us so great humility on the part of so great a God, that ~~He~~ ^{God} deemed it worthy of Him to assume the entire nature of man.¹⁰

"Know your worth, O Christians. You are made a partner of the divine nature".¹¹

We ~~are~~ ^{and} not our own. We belong to Christ. His Spirit has taken possession of us at baptism. We are the Temples of the Holy Spirit. Our thoughts, our actions, our desires, are by right ~~more~~ his than our own. But we have to struggle to insure that God always receives from us what we owe him by right. If we do not labor to overcome our natural weakness, our disordered and selfish passions, what belongs to God in us will be withdrawn from the sanctifying power of his love and will be corrupted by selfishness, ~~blinded by irrational~~ ~~corrupted by selfishness~~, blinded by irrational desire, hardened by pride, and will eventually plunge ^{us} into the abyss of moral nonentity which is called sin.

Holiness presupposes not only human intelligence, properly developed and formed by Christian education, a normal human will, a trained liberty capable of self-commitment and self oblation, but even before all this it presupposes sound and ordered human emotions.

Grace builds on nature not by suppressing instinct but by healing and elevating it to a spiritual level. ~~There~~ ^{here} must always be a place for healthy,

⁹Oden, Thomas, Words of Life, Harper Collins, p. 93

¹⁰The Word of Life, p. 129

¹¹The Word of Life, p. 129

instinctual spontaneity in Christian life. The emotions and instincts of man ^{and woman} ~~were~~ ^{are} at work in the sacred humanity of Christ Our Lord. He showed in all things a sensitive and warmly responsive human oneness.

The Christian who wants to imitate his Master must learn to do so not by imposing a crude and violent control on his emotions (and in most cases his ^{or her} efforts to do so will be a failure) but by letting grace form and develop his ^{or her} emotional life in the service of charity.¹²

Often we ask for the gift of prayer - but we know not what ^{we} ~~you~~ ask. ~~Can you drink of the chalice that I will drink?~~ For I thought naively that prayer was an ever sweet and tranquil gift bringing inner peace and joy and bliss. Now I know that while peace and consolation are assuredly there, the path leads inexorably to Gethsemane and to Galgotha.

What matters is that ^{we} ~~you~~ will be filled with the Spirit. Sometimes the Spirit will pray within ^{us} ~~you~~ with sighs too deep for words; and at other times the same Spirit will cry our; "Abba Father"

^{Will you will} Forsake ~~as well~~ good thoughts, ^{will} as evil thoughts. Get rid of thinking! For that thinking process which was once so precious is now your enemy, a possible source of illusion and an obstacle to that wisdom in emptiness which is the gift of the Spirit and our heart's desire.¹³

¹²Merton. Life and Holiness. Herder & Herder. p. 23

¹³Johnston, William. Being in Love. Fount, p. 57