



60. The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Soul and the Gift of Wisdom

The reason why the Holy Spirit is usually seen and understood by the way he works is to be found in the way he revealed himself, and continues to reveal himself.

In the text presented here taken from the 1950 October Week, Fr Kentenich follows the traditional way of seeing things. What is more typical of Fr Kentenich is that he does not consider the work of the Holy Spirit through his seven gifts, but instead looks at the essential works of the Holy Spirit, and connects them with the gift of wisdom.

It is also noteworthy that Fr Kentenich based himself less on theology, and more on stressing experiences in the spiritual life while leaving it open – perhaps there is a slight indication – to what degree he drew on his own experiences.

It is also important to note how he applied this to leading a religious community, or to the situation of the soul today. His tremendous faith in Divine Providence becomes visible when he connects the more rapid appearance of spiritual exhaustion with a positive divine intention.

The 1950 October Week was held only a few years after the Dachau period and the end of the Second World War. Its main subject is the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Mother body and soul into heaven, which had just been proclaimed. The Marian thrust and the background of the war, with all the austerity of the post-war period, could possibly have intensified the emphasis on a golden age, on the one hand, and purification, on the other, both brought about by the Holy Spirit. The text we are dealing with here places the emphasis totally on the work of the Holy Spirit. To supplement what has been said, it is necessary to mention here that Fr Kentenich also pursued the question of how we can arrive at a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. As a Person, the Holy Spirit reveals himself mainly in the person of the Blessed Mother, who was uniquely “overshadowed” by him. She is, according to Fr Kentenich, the “personal symbol” of the Holy Spirit.

The text can be found in the 1950 October Week, 1993, p. 176-188.

I want to take up the gift of the Holy Spirit that basically contains all the others: the gift of wisdom. This will inspire you far more strongly to ask the Blessed Mother – who, as the *Vas Spirituale*,¹⁷⁶ herself had the gifts of the Holy Spirit to an eminent degree, – to intercede for us to receive above all the Holy Spirit with his gift of wisdom.

Even theologians find it difficult to differentiate precisely between the individual gifts when they discuss this subject. Essentially the gifts of the Holy Spirit are simply the means to drive the soul to be generous. The gifts are like wings that bear the soul into another world. It is really beside the point to weigh up whether the Holy Spirit does it through this or that gift. That is the reason why I want to say a few words about the gift of wisdom to sum it all up.

Of course, we have to learn from those to whom God has given the gifts in outstanding measure. Philosophising on its own will not lead us to our goal. Either I may look more deeply into souls in whom the Holy Spirit is at work, or I become aware that God's Spirit has led me personally. In practice this means that we have to study our experiences in life. What does the gift of wisdom give the graced soul? To summarise, I think that the gift of wisdom gives an exceedingly bright light and an extraordinarily great love, which bring about a profound and comprehensive transformation of the soul.

What matters is the latter. We have to be transformed. The ancient saying of the Apostle Paul now becomes a joyful reality: "No longer I live, Christ lives in me."¹⁷⁷ If Christ lives in me, his Spirit also lives in me; so it is the Holy Spirit who lives in me.

Yesterday we spoke about the personality of Christ being charged with divine powers. When are these powers set free in us? It is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, who has to break into the soul. This may also be the reason for the strong urge in a number of our groups to be alone and recollect, almost as though they want to be borne upwards into another world. We can't do it on our own!

1. The gift of wisdom is, to start with, a bright light.

We want to take a leaf out of the mystics' book. We will then have points of comparison to hand. When we are dealing with the next world, we can't work with polished concepts. It is something mysterious, and a mystery has always to be revealed in images, because images contain much light at their core, and at the same time a great deal of darkness. So the mystics say that we should imagine someone who has been born blind. Such a blind person walks in the light of faith, but simply develops the virtue of faith without the gifts of the Holy Spirit becoming effective.

Also we, who normally live by the light of faith – this presupposes that the Holy Spirit has not broken into our inmost depths through his gifts – are, when compared with this level, born blind. The blind person hears all sorts of accounts about creation, the beauty of the world, the glory of the firmament, the wonders of the flora. The mystics now say that if the person born blind could suddenly by some miracle begin to see, he or she would discover: What I was able to imagine is

¹⁷⁶ Spiritual Vessel – a central invocation in the Litany of Loreto.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Gal 2,20.

nothing in comparison with the glory I may now see. This is the state of the soul when it is filled with the gift of wisdom. Suddenly it sees things in a bright light that others cannot even guess at, and it does so not only with clarity, but also with warmth and fervour, so that the soul wants to embrace these truths and realities, and is prepared to live and die for them. That is the gift of wisdom.

The gift of wisdom perfects our ability to believe in a quite outstanding way. We call it a supernatural instinct, a supernatural sense of reality.

These thoughts should inspire us to ask the Blessed Mother to give us the Holy Spirit increasingly. Think, for example, of governing a community. Unless the individuals have been given the Holy Spirit as this supernatural instinct and sense of reality, what sort of government will that be? The one will be on the one level, the others on another! However, if all of us are basically on the same level, how quickly there will be unity, because the Holy Spirit does not divide, but is at work in all in the same measure.

The mystics emphasise that this bright light, which simultaneously warms the soul, is connected with a blissful taste. I can accept a truth without hesitation and say: That's the way it is, and that's the end of it! St Bonaventure used an image in this context. He said: I can know all sorts of things in theory about the sweetness of honey, but it is quite another matter when I have at long last tasted the honey. Whoever has once tasted the bliss of the supernatural world, will have inner security. It will take some time before we not only have a taste for, but for this taste to be satisfied. You will immediately understand how people in ordinary life, who have been filled with the Holy Spirit, will love to pray, because the soul is led more deeply into the supernatural world through prayer, and indeed will have a personal taste for it. That is why a number of saints complained when they were torn away from prayer. They were torn out of a world that differs from the one our feet touch. "Send forth your Spirit ..."

Unless we as a Family manage to grow into this supernatural world and reality, we will be full of contradictions despite all our great ideals. We need the Holy Spirit all the time.

You may not think that we have already arrived at the end of our development. The ship of our Family may be sufficiently completed to set out on the high seas, but there are still a whole host of details that have to be clarified. In a certain sense we are not just a ship; we have become a whole fleet. I can guide a small boat, even a ship, but who can dare to command a whole fleet? This is how you have to see our situation. "Send forth your Spirit..."

2. The gift of wisdom gives us warm love

What the gift of wisdom gives us to an outstanding degree is **a high degree of love**. If we have the normal measure of love for God, we value God with our wills more highly than all others, but in practice our hearts are far more strongly attached to many things than to supernature. Then we are not reliable in God's hand. The danger is great that we repeatedly sidestep. Normally people are far more ruled by what their hearts unconsciously desire, than by what they want with their wills. That is why we speak not about the fusion of wills, but the fusion of hearts. It is the heart that ultimately makes us eloquent, great or weak.

The mystics tell us that love has two qualities.

a. We have to be grateful if our love is so great that it overcomes all the attacks of our drives and instincts. The gift of wisdom, however, gives this love an exceedingly **tender ardour**. Then I no longer manage to love in a purely natural way, because the whole fervour of my heart is directed to God. It is not as though I no longer love people. You can only understand these things when God shows them to the soul. It is really strange – I have natural joy, and yet only find joy in God, and only when God’s will has been fulfilled. When I say that there is no more purely natural joy, it isn’t expressed quite correctly. God wants me to enjoy natural things. But under the influence of the gift of wisdom the soul begins to understand what those words mean: *Omnia uni* – All for the One! The great fervour of my love is then ultimately bonded with God, and for God’s sake also to all creatures. I then manage to maintain great distance despite my closeness to created beings and things. Then even physical closeness cannot disturb the distance, and physical distance cannot prevent spiritual closeness. Those are masterpieces that are brought about in the workshop of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pose a different question: If we have a supernatural sense of reality, do we also need to be rooted in God’s heart? Without a doubt! Theologians therefore speak about “*pius credibilitatis affectus*”.¹⁷⁸ God is so wise that he allows a root of faith to penetrate into our heart. It is this “*pius affectus*” that is nourished by love. Then the divine instinct, the supernatural sense of reality, becomes so strong that sooner or later the other sources of knowledge become secondary. From this we can understand what those words mean, “*Justus autem meus ex fide vivit!*”¹⁷⁹ The just person lives by this sense of faith, by this supernatural sense and instinct.

b. A second quality which the soul receives through the gift of the Holy Spirit, is **constancy and reliability**. Let us now think of our own development. We have to admit that there was an ebb and flow. I have to tell myself: How far I am from loving constantly and reliably! You may not forget that the infused light, including the grace of contemplation, is not only a blissful, but also a consuming light. The light of contemplation is both at the same time: exhilarating, but also consuming. So you may not overlook the aridity of your emotional life, which often lasts for years. Who doesn’t experience this? Some do when they are young, others later. Everyone has to go through it at some time. Whoever has not experienced it may not hope that God’s grace is upholding them. Of course, Almighty God is free, but he nevertheless leads the soul according to certain laws. We have to go through this aridity at some time. But notice, with this constancy of love and sovereign staunchness, the living God is the Magnet. I am so magnetised that I am always attracted. Of course, there are other objects that also attract us, but I am so gripped by the living God that I can also be lovingly with God when my attention is absorbed by other things. Of course, faults are naturally always still possible.

When we were young, how strongly we longed for a continuous, loving relationship with God! And think of what ascetical exertions we undertook! It is possible that we even became ill as a result. We forgot that we could only prepare ourselves for this loving relationship with God by moderately active cultivation of living in God’s presence. Everything else has to be given to us by God through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The grace of transformation

However, I must immediately add that I am tearing apart what is actually a unity in practical life.

¹⁷⁸ The religious emotion that makes us inclined to believe.

¹⁷⁹ Gal 3,11.

This grace is what is expressed in technical terms as “*Transformatio in Deum/ Christum*”, that is, our transformation in God, or Christ. In order to bring about this transformation the Holy Spirit usually uses two means, which are difficult to bear in the long run. It may seem that the soul that is being led by the Holy Spirit is constantly celebrating nuptials. That is only one side of the coin. In addition there is

a. The choking – I can’t put it better – of all purely natural emotions. I no longer find any joy in purely natural joy. This incarceration can last for years; it seems a terribly harsh and austere means.

We people of today bring along with us the disposition for being constantly arid, because our souls no longer have an appropriate capacity. We have to admit that we have a tremendous deficit in our abilities. When looking at the order of salvation, therefore, we have to reckon with it that all of us will have to go through such states far sooner, far longer and far more quickly. Almighty God is making use of circumstances today, in which people are so strongly thrown into the cesspool of life, in order to give us what we need. If anyone needs the Holy Spirit, it is the people of today.

Under the influence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit the first thing that is brought about is that I no longer find purely natural joy in anything, not even the things for which I once had a marked inclination. It is simply as though it is all dried up. The Holy Spirit can only come when all enjoyment of what is purely natural has died.

b. Secondly, complete indifference to honour or contempt. This doesn’t mean that the soul doesn’t feel it! But the soul has been prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Our instrumentality is then perfected. I then no longer lead myself, the Holy Spirit leads and guides me. We know Jesus’ words to Peter, “when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.”¹⁸⁰

Now it is as though our whole inner life, our emotional life with all our abilities, has been taken into God’s possession. Then it really is God, or Christ, who lives and thinks in us, not just abstractly, but in a relatively complete way, also as far as our attitudes and life are concerned. He leads and guides our intellect. God’s Spirit thinks in us. *Connaturalitas, congenialitas!*¹⁸¹ My inner abilities have been coordinated with the supernatural reality in which the Triune God governs and triumphs. He guides and directs our visible actions. Then, as far as this is possible here on earth, the human being is complete. That is the meaning of the *sensus fidei*, the supernatural instinct and sense of reality. So once again “*Emitte Spiritum tuum ...!*”¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Jn 21,18.

¹⁸¹ A similarity that has become our second nature.

¹⁸² Send forth your Spirit ...