

God, the Holy Spirit Life in the Spirit Seminar Vietnamese Church Glen Ellyn
October 14, 2000

The Holy Spirit

I'm very happy to be here. I would like to speak about God, the Holy Spirit. Now every day we pray and we say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." But do we ever think, what does that mean? You know, when this gentleman introduced me he said that I am in charge of the Charismatic Renewal. That is not exactly true. I'm not in charge of anything! And the bishop isn't either. And the pope isn't either. The Holy Spirit is in charge! But we often do not really remember this. We keep forgetting the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and the giver of life.

The Lord, the Giver of Life

Now when Jesus talked about the Spirit he said, "The Spirit is like the wind. You don't know when it's going to come and when it's going to go." And that is true. The Holy Spirit is mysterious. The Holy Spirit cannot be described in so many words. The Holy Spirit is a mystery. The Holy Spirit is the very soul of our Church and the very soul of our own existence: the Lord, and the giver of life. We would not be alive if it were not for the Holy Spirit. There would be no life at all on earth if it were not for the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and the giver of life. And we never think about this wonderful, mysterious reality, which is God, who is God. Do we think about what St. Paul spoke to the Ephesians. He says, "We live and move and have our being in God." That means without God there is nothing! "We live, we move, we have our being in God!" But we never think about this. We imagine ourselves to be small, little, separated beings. We think of ourselves as being unworthy, weak, poor, sad, ignorant, inadequate, sometimes fearful, often anxious, worrying, sometimes angry at life, we might even say, angry at God! But why? Because we do not see. We do not see the truth that Jesus reveals to us, the truth that the Bible reveals to us.

The Creation and Fall

What does it say in the first book of the Bible when God created everything?— including you, because he is still creating; he's not done yet? When God created everything he saw it was good! That means you are good in a deep way; you are good in God. You are good because you are from God. You are good because you are going to return to God. But sin has deceived us. The serpent spoke to Eve and said, "Oh, Eve, don't be foolish. Don't believe in God. God doesn't want you to be the smartest person you can be. God doesn't want you to be as smart as God is, so I'll tell you how to get back at God. Just do what you want. Forget about God. Eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You'll be equal to God. You'll be able to decide for yourself what is good and evil," and we, that is the human race, believe this. And what's the result? What happened in the garden? God went looking for Adam and Eve and said, "Oh, where are you? Where did you go? I can't find you." And Adam said, "Oh, I was hiding." And God said, "Why? Why were you hiding?" He said, "Well, ah, well, we were naked?" And God said, "Who told you you were naked?" In other words, "Who are you believing? Who are you listening to?" He answered, "The serpent. Not you.

We didn't listen to you. We listened to the serpent!" And what was the result? Hiding from God, and so we have been hiding ever since, hiding ourselves, being ashamed, and not realizing the goodness of God, the love of God.

Salvation

And God kept trying to talk through the prophets. Nobody listened. So God said, "I will send my Son. I will send my very own self to earth so people will listen." But we don't. We don't listen to Jesus. And Jesus says, "I will send the Paraclete, and he will teach you everything—teach you everything you need to know." What is he going to teach? How good you are. What God is like; God is love. And that is what you actually come from; you come from love itself. You belong to love. You are made to love and you are loveable, no matter what you think. The Spirit will teach you this. The Spirit will teach you everything you need to know. But who listens to the Spirit? We shall listen to the serpent, who is saying, "Oh, don't trust God. God doesn't know. Be on your own. Do your own thing." And doing our own thing we get cut off from God!

Baptized in the Holy Spirit

Now do we want to stay cut off from God, or do we really want to enter into the fullness of life? That's where the Holy Spirit comes in. And we have not been fully baptized until we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Oh, yes, we're baptized in water in the name of Jesus, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Oh yes, and that's a valid sacrament. Oh yes, and the grace of God has been given us. And the virtues of God have been given to us. But they often remain fruitless! Almost like you had a garden, and you put plants out, you put seeds out, but you never water them. Well, what happens? They die. Well, sometimes the gifts we're given just die in us. But when we become immersed in the Holy Spirit, then we start to know what life is all about, because the Holy Spirit is the Lord, and the giver of life—all life: physical life, spiritual life, vegetable life, animal life, human life—life, and ultimately eternal life, the life of God. That's the Holy Spirit.

Metanoia

But when the Holy Spirit comes into us we have to make certain decisions. We have to decide not to believe any longer in the serpent. We have to decide we're not going to listen anymore to all the negative talk we hear from our culture, or even maybe sometimes we heard it from our parents who didn't know any better. Maybe they said to us, "You're stupid!" Or maybe they said to us, "You can't do anything!" Or maybe they didn't say anything, but they really didn't hold us. They really didn't love us, and so we never knew the Holy Spirit; we never had that sense of how loveable we are. So we heard about God as a Father, but then if our fathers weren't really warm and loving and affectionate as God the Father is, well, then we kind of didn't know what it meant. Well, we say, "Oh yeah, I believe that," but believe what? If God is Father—yeah, but my father always beat me, so we think. Or my father was stern, so God must be stern. No, God the Father is much better than any father we could have on earth. And we'll know the Father in the Spirit—through the Son, in the Spirit.

Repentance

So being baptized in the Holy Spirit is all about being immersed in this love and life of God. And it really means that we repent. We come to repentance. Jesus said, “Now is the time.” It’s right now for everybody! Now is the time. Repent! Turn away from the serpent. Turn away from everything that is negative. Turn away from any thoughts about how bad you are. Give all that up, and let the Holy Spirit start teaching you how good you are.

The Fruits of the Spirit

And when you start to let the Holy Spirit teach you how good you are, you know what is going to start flowing out of you? The fruit of the Spirit!

Charity

Charity, love will come right out of you. Why? It’s from the Holy Spirit. And you will realize you’re not separated from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is flowing through you. You are part of this movement of the Spirit. There’s not a separate, little you somewhere; but you are part of something bigger. St. Paul says, “We’re all members of one body.” Well, could you imagine a hand deciding I’m not going to do what the arm says! “I don’t care what the head that’s attached to my arm says! I’m going to do what I want.” That’s what we do when we are all by ourselves. When we sin we are a separate hand. It makes no sense. But in the Holy Spirit we get all reconnected. And the fruit of the Spirit comes out—charity.

Joy

Joy. Joy is the sense that right now God’s life is flowing through me. And you know, you can’t pretend joy; you either are joyful or you are not joyful. And the joy you have is really from God.

Peace

Peace. Jesus says, “I have come to give you peace.” But you really don’t have peace without the Holy Spirit, since Jesus gives the Holy Spirit as the source of peace. Now the world talks about peace, and right now they are saying, “Oh, we wish we had peace in the Middle East.” Well, all they are talking about is that people stop fighting. That’s not peace. Peace is something else. Peace is a deep sense and feeling that everything is all right. Everything is all right with you. It doesn’t mean that you’re perfect, that you’ve solved every problem. It doesn’t mean that you’ve never made any mistakes. It doesn’t mean that you have never sinned. It just means that everything is all right now and forever—peace, a gift of the Spirit.

Patience

Patience. Patience starts with yourself. You must be patient with yourself. Patience means the ability to wait. When we are impatient with ourselves, we are impatient with others. When we’re impatient with others, then we’re forgetting all about the Holy Spirit. Patience means that you are able to wait, wait for the flow of God’s grace to work: let God be God! It’s not your plan that matters. In fact, all the plans we have are really a substitute for listening to God. Patience—is the time right? If it’s right, it’s right; if it’s not, it’s not. Patience is a gift of the Spirit.

Kindness

Kindness. Kindness is a very human trait. But sometimes we’re very unkind. Why? We are deaf to the Holy Spirit. Now sometimes a parent has to be firm with a child

because the child is wild and needs—kind of like a horse, you have bring the bridle in a little bit. That’s not unkindness. But we can be unkind. We can say things that are true, but we shouldn’t say them. We do that all the time! “Well, I’m just telling the truth!” But the truth doesn’t always have to be said, and ought not be said when it hurts someone—for no reason except so you feel better, so you are better than them! Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit.

Goodness, Mildness

Goodness. Goodness has to do also with—there is another word “mildness.” What’s the opposite of mildness? Violence. There is no violence in the Spirit. The Spirit is gentle, mild. You know, in the gospel Jesus looks up and it says he sees the Spirit descending like a dove. Well, I don’t know if you know much about doves, but doves are very gentle in their descent, nothing violent. So when we’re full of the Spirit, we’re not violent. We don’t do anything in a violent, forceful way. We don’t force ourselves on other people. We don’t force our wills on other people. We just gently invite. We open ourselves to others, knowing that we might be hurt. We don’t shut the door because “Oh, if they come in here, they may hurt my feelings!” No, we open the door. We don’t hurt their feelings. If we get our feelings hurt, well, we prefer that. That’s a fruit of the Spirit.

Generosity

Generosity. Generosity is a fruit of the Spirit. Now we see generous people now and then. We think of the most generous person I can think of right off the top of my head—Mother Teresa. What a generous woman she was! But what a rich woman she was! You know, the generosity of the Spirit makes you so rich because when you give up yourself, your self-will, when you give that to God, you are just repaid by God a hundredfold, a thousandfold, and there’s no end to it! And anybody who ever heard Mother Teresa speak knows what a rich woman she was. She was so rich because she had the Holy Spirit inside of her. No. Even that’s the wrong way to put it! She was one with the Spirit, who was always using her, working through her; and that itself is such a rich blessing. It’s a generosity—mildness and generosity.

Self-control

Self-control. Self-control has a lot of different things. Chastity is one of them. A Spirit-filled person doesn’t go looking for excitement and pleasure where it’s inappropriate. You know, when you look at our world, and how many people are running around, running around, running around, looking for excitement, going to amusement parks, looking at pornography, every kind of excitement, you know what? It’s because they don’t know the Holy Spirit. Because anybody who knows the Holy Spirit would not be interested at all—would not be interested at all! Self-control is the fruit of the Spirit. When you’re full of the Spirit you are in control of yourself; and it’s an easy, peaceful, gentle self-control, not forceful, domineering—no—but easy, peaceful, accepting self-control.

Fear of the Lord

Fear of the Lord. Fear of the Lord is a term a lot of people don’t understand. Fear of the Lord means reverence, reverence for what is holy. It doesn’t mean fear in the sense that I’m afraid and scared. It’s not being scared of God. Fear of the Lord is reverence for what is holy and who is holy. And reverence for what is holy and who is holy spreads to everyone because we start to revere our sisters and brothers, whom we know are also temples of the Holy Spirit. And when we have this Holy Spirit in us, that’s not just a

bunch of words; but it's really something we feel. We feel the Holy Spirit in others, and we reverence the Holy Spirit in others!

Our Beliefs

The Holy Spirit

And not only do we reverence the Holy Spirit in others, but we have a deep sense of mystery in life. We realize life is a great mystery, and we are open to mystery. When it comes to faith, faith isn't something we hold onto; we realize God is holding onto us! Some people think that they are great believers because they are always holding on. Oh, they won't let go of anything. Of course, what are they believing in? Their beliefs! Their convictions! That's self-centered really. But when we really come into the Holy Spirit, we let go of that. We have a deep and profound gift of faith, which is a gift which gives us courage to trust in the mystery of life and the goodness of God and the goodness of people, and we come to believe also in the holy catholic Church, which is the second point in the Creed.

The Holy Catholic Church

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church." You really don't believe in the holy catholic Church until you believe in the Holy Spirit. People say, "Well, that's my Church." Well, that's not believing in it. That's just because you think that's where you belong. That's not believing in it. Believing in the holy catholic Church means you believe in the Holy Spirit that is the soul of the Church, and you reverence what the Church is because you are flowing with the same Spirit, and you have great trust in the mystery of the Church, and you reverence what the Church does and says because the Holy Spirit is the soul of that—moving through it.

The Communion of Saints

So a belief in the Spirit leads to a belief in the Church, which leads to belief in the communion of saints. You really don't believe in the communion of saints until the Holy Spirit helps you realize how you're connected to the saints. The communion of saints isn't just people who are dead and gone. The communion of saints is living, and they're living as part of the Church; and we are the Church. They're part of us. Especially when we gather around the table of the Lord for the Eucharist, who is with us? The communion of saints. They're here with us. That's why when we come to the Preface of the Mass we pray that great beautiful hymn, which is really the hymn of the angels: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of power and might." Well, how can we say that? Well, because we're with the saints and the angels. They're with us; we're with them. It's all one thing. There's no separation between us and them. We're one Church. We believe in the communion of saints. Only when you really believe in the Holy Spirit can you believe in the communion of saints.

The Forgiveness of Sins

The forgiveness of sins. If you follow, you believe in the forgiveness of sins. It doesn't mean I go into the confessional: I confess my sins, and I come out, and I go do it all again. No, that means that I really believe that everybody can change. I can change. You can change. We have some bad habits, bad ways of living, bad ways of thinking,

negative, harmful, egotistical, self-centered, violent, but that all can change. I believe in the forgiveness of sins. Well, how can you believe in the forgiveness of sins? Well, you can if you believe in the Holy Spirit. If you're baptized in the Holy Spirit, you'll believe in the forgiveness of sins. It doesn't mean, well, you think of it as a chalkboard, and God has some chalk marks, well, that's that sin, that's the next sin, and then another sin, and now in confession it was just wiped off, and then a week later, another one, and another one. No, no. It means you are immersed in the Spirit and you believe that you are forgiven and everyone is forgiven, so you start treating people differently, and you think differently about yourself.

The Resurrection of the Body

"I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body." You know, we Christians believe in the resurrection of the body; we don't believe in the immortality of the soul. Resurrection of the body. Jesus was raised from the dead. The Blessed Mother was taken body and soul into heaven, and we shall too. When we die we shall be restored to our bodies—not this particular body with this particular kind of matter, but a body. Now, we are not called into floating around in some air somewhere. And we're not called to be angels either. We're called to be human beings with human bodies, and we are going to relate to each other through glorified bodies throughout eternity. Now what does that mean? Don't ask me! I haven't been there yet! But I believe it! In the Holy Spirit you will too.

And Life Everlasting

"The resurrection of the body, and life everlasting." Life everlasting! Really it means "life eternal" in this case, because God who is eternal—no beginning, no end—says to us, "Guess what? You can come live my life. Not just live with me, but live in me. Take on my life!" Just as in Jesus, God took on our life. What an exchange! Jesus comes, takes our life. Actually, St. Paul says, "He becomes sin," a hard thought to think, but he became sin. He was baptized, which means he took upon himself our sinfulness and therefore all the consequences of it: all the suffering, all the pain, all the feelings of alienation and separation—took them all on himself. Then he took all this to the Father. And he gave up his entire life to the Father. And through that sacrifice, which we renew every time we have Mass, the Eucharist—every time we renew that sacrifice—we're in that sacrifice; we're part of that sacrifice. That sacrifice is being presented to us at this time, which is actually eternal reality. Through that sacrifice new life has come into the world—eternal life with God!

Jesus was raised from the dead. He descended into hell to bring up the just from the pit to take them to be with God, and he will take us as well. We shall reign with God, reign with God—not just live with God, but reign with God! If we are to reign with God, we are really princesses and princes. We are inheriting the eternal life of heaven, and in the Holy Spirit that will become a daily reality that we have within us, and nothing will take it away. And when we have problems, when we get sick, even if it's something like cancer or heart attack, the Holy Spirit will be with us. The Lord, the giver of life will be with us as helper and friend, and God will never, ever, abandon us! The gift of the Spirit! Praise God!