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Prayer and Introduction

Thank you very much. I ask you to pray with me. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Holy Spirit, please come tonight and fill the hearts of your faithful and bring the wind and the fire of your love. Enkindle in us this power that is of you, that is of God, that will bring onto all of us a new Pentecost and fulfill the wishes of the Son of God. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Well, Good Evening everyone. Tonight I'm very happy to be with you to share something about the Holy Spirit, but there is only one problem. When I first talked to, I think it was Frank—Joe—and said, "Oh, of course, I'd love to talk about the Holy Spirit." And then I thought to myself, how can I ever talk about the Holy Spirit in one night? The Holy Spirit is a huge topic, and I will not do it justice in all honesty; but I ask you to bear with me and hopefully perhaps something of the nature of God and the Holy Spirit will come into your heart and will touch you, hopefully—perhaps even change your life!

Concepts of Father and Son

Now when we refer to God as Holy Spirit we are doing something that is a little difficult already to grasp. God is one, subsisting in three divine persons, as we well know: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Father—that's an easy image for us to handle. When we talk about God the Father, we say he is the creator of heaven and earth. We understand this because our reason searches for an answer to where did I come from; where did everything come from? Our reason wants to know, and our reason therefore provides a basis for the idea of creator. Furthermore as Jesus introduced us to God the Father he used the word "Abba," which means, really, "Daddy." And if we have had a good father, we know what parental, fatherly, paternal care is. And so we can identify Father, Abba, creator. Those are terms that are related to our experience of family life and our reasonable request for the answer to what is the ground, what is the beginning, what is the origin of our existence?

When we talk about the Son, in a sense it's even easier, because Jesus is like us in all things but sin. So we say, "Jesus, our brother." Jesus is God, but Jesus is fully human. We know he did not ever sin, but he is fully human; so we have a basis for thinking about God the Son. The basis actually is our own selves, our experiences.

Concepts of Spirit as Air, as Life

But now when we say God as the Holy Spirit, it's not so easy. When we say God as Holy Spirit, we're using a word, "spirit," which we probably don't even know what it means. Actually the word "spirit" comes from the Latin word "spiritus," meaning breath. Well, why would we call God a breath? Already it's like well, that's a little mysterious.

Well, the word in Greek, “pneuma,” and for that matter the word in Hebrew, “Ruah,” means also breath, also wind, also air. Well, this is a mysterious way to refer to God. Why call God air? Well, because there is something that God is trying to reveal about himself that can't be grasped just like you can't grasp the air. Just try to. Try to put your arms around the air. You can't! And therefore, although God is to some degree knowable and to some degree reveals himself to us, as Father, as our brother, as one like ourselves and yet different, God also remains mysterious; and this is what we're talking about when we talk about God the Holy Spirit. We're talking about the utter mysteriousness of God, the ungraspable nature of God, the uncontrollable nature of God.

But I don't really think that for that reason we should simply give up, because when you think about it, life itself is something like the air. How do we explain life? How do we explain the mystery of something we are now living? We're living our own lives; how do you explain that? Well, we don't really explain it. We are living; we don't explain life. Life itself has this mysterious quality to it. Now in the Creed we say, “The Holy Spirit is the Lord, the giver of life.” So right away when we talk about the Holy Spirit, we are going to have to think about the Lord, and the giver of life—life, that mysterious reality that science loves to study but can't explain, that we all are involved in but really can't control.

Old Testament

Now in the Old Testament there really is no real foreshadowing of the Holy Spirit in so many words except that there is a sense of great mystery. God is very mysterious, works in inscrutable ways, intervenes in the life of a people, but is not exactly understood as God is understood in the New Testament. But there is a word in the Old Testament for spirit or for breath, for wind, “Ruah”; and that is used for life. That's how the connection is between the Holy Spirit and the Lord and giver of life. “Ruah,” breath itself, is the life. How the Hebrew people understood creation is that God breathed his own breath—now this is a metaphor, we're speaking of God now as breathing—he breathed his own breath into the clay. And that's what we are—a living soul. We're clay with the breath of God in us. And throughout the Old Testament the idea was always kept that life belongs to God. When a person died, they said the life went back to God. There was another something in a person which is called the “nephesh.” Literally the nephesh means throat. But it's also a kind of a soul or an identity that would pass into the pit of the earth—they called it, “Sheol.” But the life was actually God's; life belongs to God.

New Testament Traditions

Now in the New Testament, there are two different traditions about the Holy Spirit. And the first one is found in the synoptics—I've got to take this off, gets warm in here—(Father removes his suit jacket.) In the synoptic gospels, which are, of course, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Spirit is present except not referred to very often. The Holy Spirit is mentioned in Mark, for example, at when? At Jesus' baptism. When Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit descends upon him in a sort of physical way; it's a sort of physical form. And then after he is baptized, after he is filled with the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit leads

him into the desert where he is tested. And then we don't hear about the Holy Spirit anymore in Mark's gospel. That's the first and the shortest gospel—first written I should say.

Then in Matthew where the Holy Spirit is present at the conception of Jesus in the womb of the Blessed Mother. The Holy Spirit overshadows her. Jesus is conceived; that is, the Son of God taking flesh is conceived in this way. The Holy Spirit is in on the very beginning. Once again, at the baptism of Jesus the Holy Spirit is present. Once again, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into his trial in the desert. And then at the end of Matthew's gospel, the Holy Spirit is invoked where Jesus sends out his disciples to make disciples of all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. But in-between, by name, the Holy Spirit is not referred to. There are references to a spiritual reality, but the Holy Spirit is not named as such.

Then when we come to Luke's gospel, in the infancy narrative, we see that the Holy Spirit is mentioned by name, although another term is used: "the power of the Most High." The power of the Most High overshadows Mary and she conceives and she bears Jesus. Again at the baptism of Jesus there is a return of the Spirit by name. Again through the gospel not much mention, and at the end nothing. But then Luke adds the Book of Acts. Luke is the author of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts.

Now in the Acts of the Apostles there are fifty-seven references to the Holy Spirit. And what Luke is trying to tell the Church is that the Spirit who descended upon Jesus in his baptism has now descended upon the Church, and that the very same ministry that Jesus himself worked on earth is now the ministry of the Church, and it's to be as faithful to the message as Jesus was, and it will be empowered as much as Jesus was. There's even a mention of this in John's Gospel where it says, "Greater things than I have done you shall do also." Now I want you to think about that and to say that's one of the statements of Scripture you ought to take literally. "Greater things than I have done," Jesus says to his disciples, "you shall do also." This is a prophecy and a command to the Church, to the disciples, to carry on the work that Jesus began!

The Inner Life

Now I said that in Matthew's Gospel there's no later mention of the Spirit, but there is something pretty important as related to this. And that is the mentioning of the inner life. Now we cannot say it's the "Holy Spirit"—we start looking inside of what he called the "cup." If you recall the story in Matthew 15, when Jesus is in one of his more or less forthright moods, what he is really telling the Pharisees is that they are hypocrites. And a little further on in Chapter 23 he says, "You are hypocrites because you do all these things, and that's all good. You tithe, and you pray, and that's really nice; but inwardly you are corrupt." He used the expression, "You wash the outside of the cup, but the inside of it is full of filth." He says, "In fact you're like whited sepulchers, beautiful on the outside, but inside you are full of dead men's bones." He's talking about a distinction that has to be made if we're going to be spiritual people between the inner part and the

outer part of our lives. We need to think about that or we won't know what the Holy Spirit is about.

External Behavior

You see the Pharisees were really very good people, after a way of thinking. Let's say this, if you want to be a Jew, a Moslem, a Buddhist, a Christian, a Methodist, a Catholic, no matter what you want to do, whatever you want to be, there is, you might say, a standard, an ideal. This is what a good Catholic is. This is what a good Jew is. This is what a good Moslem is. This is what a good Buddhist is. Okay? That's true for everybody. Now as we kind of move into a particular group, church, whatever you want to call it, we say I want to be a good Moslem, I want to be a good Jew, I want to be a good Catholic—whatever. Okay, this is what we do; and we learn this as we learn all behaviors, we listen, we copy. Is there anything bad about this? Well, not maybe too bad, but it's not really what it means to give yourself to God. There is an interiority that is inside of human beings, and most of us do not like to look inside, into the cup, to use the expression that's found in Chapter 23. We don't like to look inside. And if we did look inside, we really wouldn't see much anyway because there is something about us that we are pretty well equipped with, you might say, buffers that prevent us from seeing the truth about ourselves.

Now that does not prevent us from seeing the truth about other people. And I have witnessed this very often when people come to me and they complain. They say, "You know, I really don't like her because she is always talking about people." This is coming from, you know, an "A Number 1" gossip! Or they say, "You know, I really don't like him because he is always expressing whatever he thinks." This is from a person who is always saying whatever he thinks! See? So we do see in other people all kinds of objectionable qualities, but in ourselves it's different. In ourselves it's virtue—somehow! "Well, I'm only saying what I believe. I'm speaking my convictions." See? "Well, I'm only being honest about all these people. I just don't want you to be fooled." So that's the way we are. Now Jesus knew that. He had a very good way, which at the end of this talk I'm going to show you how to actually see into ourselves—very simple, really.

Pentecost

But going back to the idea of the Acts of the Apostles and the fifty-seven references—I'm not going to read them to you. But, you know, the first most important thing in Chapter 2 is the story of Pentecost itself. And the story of Pentecost is the story of a group of men and perhaps the Blessed Mother, maybe a few other women, gathered together, more or less frozen by fear, afraid to go out, and this mysterious, miraculous power entered into their lives. And that fear was gone, and not only was that fear gone, but when they went outside they were proclaiming to everyone their belief that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead; and that after all is very difficult to say to strangers. Try it sometime! They did it in the power of the Holy Spirit, not in their own power. And not only that, when they touched people, laid hands on people the way they saw Jesus do it, (Father snaps his fingers) they found these people were healed! The power

that had been in Jesus was in them from Pentecost onward! This is clear in the Acts of the Apostles.

Baptism of Cornelius

Now further there's a very important story in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 10. It's called the "Baptism of Cornelius." What is really amazing about it is the Holy Spirit descended upon people who weren't even baptized with water, who had never even made a profession of faith. Now you ask any priest, "Well, what must I do to become a Catholic? I mean, what's the real event that makes me a Catholic?" He'll say, "Baptism." But if you really study Baptism, you'll say, "Well, you can't be baptized until you have made the profession of faith." And even when we have Baptism of infants, someone has to stand there in the name of the infant and make a profession of faith. There is no Baptism without faith. But guess what? In the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 10, there is a baptism in the Spirit of God before this profession of faith and before there is a Baptism of water, before there's any entrance into the life of the Church! The Holy Spirit alighted on these Gentiles, and the apostles said, "What's going on here? This should not be happening!" They didn't like it! The apostles didn't like a lot of things that went on in the early Church. They didn't like the fact that the Gentiles were coming in and saying, "Well, we believe in Jesus, and we believe he is the Son of God; we believe he was raised from the dead, but we're not going to follow all those rules you guys have from the Old Testament and from the rabbis!" There were a lot of people who didn't like that! There were all kinds of things people had to get used to. What the Church learned at that time was we don't really know; we have to learn.

Spirit as Teacher

Of course, Jesus already told them it had to be. He said, "Look, there are no teachers among you. Don't be called 'Rabbi.' There are no teachers. There's only one teacher—the Spirit." That's what it says in John's Gospel. In Matthew's it says, "There is only one teacher, the Messiah." But the Messiah becomes the Messiah by being anointed by the Spirit. Jesus became the Messiah because he was baptized by the Holy Spirit, not because he went in the water, but because the Holy Spirit descended upon him—that's what made him the Messiah! So the Holy Spirit started right away in the foundation of the Church doing all kinds of things, and the apostles were kind of running to catch up: Well, what's he going to do now? I mean, and you know, let's face it, they were the same as we are.

And you know what one of the great human problems is—and I might even say sins, if I dare to say that? It's control! Human beings want to control everything. It's part of our sinful nature, our fallen nature. We would rather control than trust. What's faith all about? It's about trust. What's control all about? Not trusting. We have to think about this. Well, they were no different in those days.

Spirit Guiding the Early Church

So Peter argued with Paul; and Paul argued with the Judaizers, who were more conservative than Peter. There are three different parties. The party of Paul said, “Let’s forget about the Old Testament. Let’s forget about the law.” Peter said, “Well, let’s keep it for those of us who are Jewish, and let’s not force it on the Gentiles.” And then another group—we don’t have any name for that group, we said they are called “Judaizers.” Apparently they weren’t long-lasting. They said, “No, Gentiles have to become Jews before they become Christians.” Three different points of view—they fought; they argued. Now we know in time what happened. The Spirit led Gentiles into the Church, and pretty soon the Church became totally Gentile. That was the work of the Spirit. Well, we would be very foolish if we were to think for one moment that the Holy Spirit, after having established this Church, after having drawn forth disciples, now retired! That’s not the way it works.

But for a moment I am going to move into Paul and John. I mentioned Matthew, Mark and Luke; now what about Paul and John? Actually they talk a lot more about the Holy Spirit than the other three. Why? Well, John, for example, is really interested in showing people not only what Jesus did when he was on earth, but what Jesus is doing right now in the Church of his time, maybe what?—sixty years after, maybe a little longer than the time of Christ. He wants to present to his people, the Church for whom he is writing, he wants to present not only stories about the past, but the risen Lord ministering right now in the Church; so he brings in references to the Spirit all the time because there is no Church without Spirit, without that dimension! Then all we would be doing is just starting a new set of rules and having a new ideal and a new standard that would get rid of the old, and now we have a new one.

The Inner and Outer Life

But Jesus’ point was to renew people from inside—see?—to renew people from inside. What he said, if you will recall, when discussing Jewish practices, he says, “You know, it’s not what goes in a man from outside that makes him unclean, but what comes out of him makes him unclean.” See, that’s not the way Jews thought about things. The Jewish religion was preoccupied with the idea of purity, purity of all kinds, cleanliness, physical cleanliness. The Kosher laws all had to do with cleanliness: sprinkling food, washing hands, keeping oneself clean, even circumcision was initiated by interest in cleanliness. The whole concept of when can you go to the temple? Well, you know, it’s a matter of are you clean? If there was a flow of blood, then you’re not clean for a certain length of time. Why the time, I’m not sure; but flows of blood or flows of any fluids from the body all were unclean. Certain kinds of food were unclean. Certain people were unclean. Sick people were unclean; anybody sick was unclean. Anyone dead was unclean. See, they were preoccupied with cleanliness! See?

And Jesus said, “Look, it’s really good to be clean, but it’s not stuff coming from outside that makes you really dirty. What makes people dirty is what’s inside of them: loot and lust and greed and slander and blasphemy. All those things are uncleanness

inside; and since we're walking around and following external regulations, we're not even looking inside. And that's what he called hypocrisy—used often. A hypocrite, actually in Greek, means an actor. Think about it. What does an actor do? If you go to the stage and you see Kenneth Branagh, or whatever his name is, and he's playing Hamlet, do you think for a moment that he is really Hamlet. Yeah, I guess during the play you do, but if you saw him on the street you'd know that's an actor. That's not Hamlet. Well, that can be also what happens with our religious practice. That's what Jesus was saying. We're really not who we are pretending to be. We're just playing a role. That's the idea of hypocrisy.

So there are these two worlds of the inner and the outer. And St. Paul will talk about them in terms of the “flesh” and the “spirit.” He will talk constantly in all his letters about the flesh and the spirit. And it is very important we understand what he means because what he is saying is that the flesh is—what is the flesh? The flesh is our ordinary human, biological life. Now the pope recently said that the Church has no objection to the idea of evolution in regard to the physical, biological order. See? Biologically we have evolved from lower forms of life. The pope says it's okay if we believe that, but he says, you know, spiritually of course that's something entirely different. Exactly! Spiritually it's entirely different! We do not evolve into a spiritual kind of being—we don't evolve into a spiritual being. We can only become a spiritual being by a supernatural power of God—the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit transforms us, our fleshly existence, into a spiritual existence. And this happens, according to St. Paul, Romans, Chapter 6, in and through the sacrament of Baptism—the sacrament of Baptism.

Sacrament of Baptism

He says, “If we have died with Christ in Baptism, we live a new life.” Now think about this. What does he mean died? He doesn't mean physically you're dead—he is not talking to people who are dead! He is talking about something else. What dies? Well, think about what it means to live a normal, physical, human, biological life. What's the rule of biology? “Survival of the fittest.” Survival—survival is the law. That's the biological law. And if you think about this for a minute, you'll know that's really what drives the world. What's everyone trying to do? Survive. And some people use any means at all to survive. Survival is the law. Survival is their goal and nothing else. And they'll step on people, and they'll kill people, and they'll do anything to survive, to get ahead, to promote themselves. That's the flesh, a pretty good example of the flesh—so that's what it is like.

When Paul says, “We have died,” he means that no longer do we live to live. We don't live to survive. We don't live with survival as our highest goal. No, that's what's died; what's died is the centeredness of ourselves. We can no longer live now in Christ centered on “me.” I can't be the center of my life anymore. That's what has to die, because he says, “We live a new life,” not new lives—no plural there—a new life! We all live a new life: that's the life of the Holy Spirit; it's the life of the risen Christ; it's the life of God. And then we become centered on God! And this can only happen by the Holy Spirit working really within us from inside—not from outside. That's the whole

idea about the cup. Our problems are not outside of us: that's what that teaching means. Our problems are inside of us, and therefore the solution comes from the power of God working inside us, and that by working inside us we are changed outwardly. It's an inside job, this work of God, this transformation in the Holy Spirit—it's an inside job!

Sin: Missing the Mark

And it's a job that we have to allow the Spirit to do because we can resist it. What's resistance to this called? Sin! Literally, in Greek, "hamartia" means what? It means "missing the mark." What's the mark? The mark is we live a new life. What's missing the mark? I live my life. I promote myself. I care about myself. I do everything to survive in my little world. And I love and care for my own whatever my own are. Maybe my own is my wife today, but maybe tomorrow she is not my own anymore. But it's all "me and mine." That's the world of the flesh. The world of the Spirit is not like that; it's really different. It's not so easy to talk about either. But the Spirit and only the Holy Spirit can lead us into this. Resisting it is sin, hamaria, missing the mark.

The Unforgivable Sin

Resisting it absolutely or refusing it, that is the unforgivable sin! What does Jesus say? He says there's an unforgivable sin. He calls it the "sin against the Holy Spirit." The sin against the Holy Spirit means the sin of refusing to die to "myself," allowing God to become my center. I say no to that. The power of the Holy Spirit is given to me, but I say no—the sin against the Holy Spirit—unforgivable. God cannot forgive that because forgiveness itself is a bringing of us into the life of God. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit itself—the indwelling of really the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So if we say no to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we say no to the work of the Spirit in our life, well, then we can't be forgiven. We just can't be forgiven because we're saying no to what redemption is. We are saying no to salvation; and we are free to do so.

Jesus and Nicodemus

Now John, also Spirit-filled and Spirit-minded, as Paul was—both were very spiritual, constantly referring to the Spirit—John says, right in the beginning of John, Chapter 3, there is this beautiful dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus; and you're very familiar with it. Nicodemus comes to Jesus and says, "What must I do to gain eternal life?" A straightforward question—right? What must I do? And Jesus didn't say anything about doing. He said, "No one can see the kingdom"—no one can see the kingdom—"without being born from above." Now in fact the Greek words there mean "born" or "begotten," because it's the same word in Greek—"from above" or "again"—same word too. So in a sense John, the evangelist, is trying to play with some words. It's kind of a holy pun—it is! So Jesus says, "Well, you cannot see the kingdom, what I'm talking about: this new reality of God's life in us and what God really created the whole world for. You can't even see it until you are born from above, until something new is born in you." And of course, Nicodemus misunderstands this and says, "Well, how can anybody be born again? Do I go back into the womb?" And Jesus says, "No." He says, "No one can

enter the kingdom of God without being born”—or begotten, as I say it is the same word—“of water and Spirit.” Water and Spirit!

Understanding the Sacrament of Baptism

Now in the Catholic Church we’ve always understood water and Spirit to refer to what? The sacrament of Baptism. Literally what the Greek actually says is “water and air.” Now it’s very peculiar that many of our Baptist friends and Free Church friends, non-sacramental church friends, Pentecostals, etc.—they do have faith in Christ—and when they read this they say, “Well, air really does refer to the Holy Spirit; we believe that.” “Pneuma” means Holy Spirit. But where it says “water” they say, “Well, that doesn’t mean Baptism.” Oh! How come they take half of the tradition and not the other half? I don’t know; it’s rather unreasonable as far as I’m concerned! The Church has always held these two things together to mean the power of Baptism.

Water

Now let’s look at water for a moment before we look at Spirit. Water—well, first of all, there’s the obvious power of water to refresh and renew people. The Jewish people live in an arid climate; Israel is a very arid place. And in Qumran there are all these little pools; it’s near the Dead Sea. And there are all these little pools, and apparently they practiced some ritual bathing from time to time. Jewish people had already adopted the idea of baptism, a type of bathing, for new converts beginning. Of course they loved purification, so it was a purification rite. But there’s a lot more meaning to Baptism and to water than simply purification.

Think about the Book of Genesis. What does it say? “In the beginning, when God created, the voice of God hovered over the waters.” Now you might say, “Now wait a minute! We’re talking about the very beginning when God created everything from nothing, and yet here the waters are?” Well, the waters—that is a symbolic image of the total potential of everything; everything that God could create is called “the waters.” This image is deep in the history of not only the Hebrew people but also other people. They have these images of deep water out of which comes creation. Guess what? Many modern biologists believe that on the earth actually it was the water out of which came the first life forms. Their argument is that until the ozone layer was complete, the rain and the sun would destroy the DNA on the earth; so that only in the water could life really grow protected. So out of the water comes life according to modern biologists, according to the Bible, according to many ancient stories of creation. So there’s a great power here when Jesus says, “You must be born again, or born from above, by water.” It’s water now that is the symbol of all of this potential for life.

When I was in Israel, I entered into the water of the Jordan; and it’s really slimy! However slim is considered by ancient people to be fertile. In fact there is a word in German for the earliest stuff that was used to make everything else; and it’s called “urschleim,” which means the “oldest schleim.” Back to the Jordan River. So Jesus was actually baptized in the Jordan River in this slimy little stream, but it’s full of fertility!

Now at the exodus, water is used in a different way. Remember how the Hebrews were brought out of slavery into freedom through water. Some say it was the Red Sea; some translate the Reed Sea. I don't care whether it was Red or Reed—but it's something watery. Now when you go to Rome, it's very interesting where they built the first big baptistery. It's a pool, but it was not a pool for dunking as people might image like a swimming pool. It's a pool for traversing. Baptism was performed by traversing the pool. Why? Because in their mind the meaning of Baptism is we are now being liberated from our old life of sin, of self-centeredness and all the passions and violence and difficulties and evils that go with that, and we're now being freed from that and we're entering into a new life with God. And in fact the men would always take all their clothes off before they went through. Women would wear some sort of a veil, but men would walk through naked. And on the other side they would get a white garment to signify the new life, which they now shared in common, the new life of Christ. So the exodus is another indication of what it means to be begotten from above. In a sense that was a moment of begetting for the Hebrew people. They start all over again. Think about this: they had been five hundred years in a country, and they had never been considered citizens! Five hundred years! Five hundred years they had been inferior “nothings,” and God brought them out of that land and established them as a people—his people with a purpose, which is the covenant.

Now there's another meaning of water. And that reference is found in the preaching of John the Baptist, because John the Baptist was always talking about the “judgment of God.” And he was a fearsome preacher—let me tell you! And he was telling people to prepare for the coming judgment of God, which would come with fire. And there were other prophets too who used the symbol of fire to show how the judgment of God would fall upon the earth and it would burn up the evil. And so when John would talk about the baptism—you know, what is this baptism of John anyway? It wasn't really a baptism of new birth. It wasn't a baptism of liberation. It was a baptism of preservation from destruction because if the fire is all around us, and we're in water, well, that's the best place to be! That's the idea—that's the idea.

Sacraments: Communal Celebrations of the Power of the Spirit

Now it's the understanding of the Church: Paul, John, the early Church, that for us to live this new life we have to be, as it were, born anew or begotten anew. In the story of Nicodemus it goes on and Jesus explains. He says, “Look, Nicodemus, flesh begets flesh, but spirit begets spirit.” So that's the idea of a need for a new spiritual life.

Baptism

In the early Church the understanding was this took place through the mediation of believers so that Baptism—and for that matter all the sacraments, are first and foremost—they are really communal celebrations of the power of the Spirit, the power of the risen Christ. Take for example Baptism. When the Church celebrates Baptism we think in terms of the individual because we're still thinking—we're caught in this society, which is a fleshly society, and we think in terms of being individual; and we don't think about

the new life. Baptism is really a celebration of the new life we have in Christ. We need to constantly celebrate that new life and extend it to new members—and extend it to new members! The extension to new members is secondary. What’s primary is the celebration itself of the new life!

Confirmation

Confirmation—we are celebrating the gift of the Spirit. When St. Paul talks about the life of the believer he says, “The first fruit of the life of a believer is the Spirit.” In another text he says, “The first fruit of the life of a believer is hope.” Now what? Did he forget he said the Spirit before?—or which did he say first?—or did he change his mind? No, he can’t separate hope and Spirit. What does it mean to have hope? It means we look at life not in terms of our effort, our purposes, or our vision; but we look at life in terms of what God intends, and based upon the promise of God we have hope. We recognize, we see, that all things work out for those who love God because God has so promised. That’s hope. It’s a virtue. It needs to be exercised. It’s a gift given in the Holy Spirit, the first fruits of those who believe. The Church symbolizes, effectively signifies, this gift in the sacrament of Confirmation. Again, what is primary is that we recognize the gift of the Spirit, we recognize the virtue of hope, which is a gift we have to exercise; and then we extend it to others. But you see that’s the “and then” we extend it to others.

Eucharist

Eucharist—same thing. For centuries there were people—the Church celebrated Eucharist for centuries when no one ever came to communion. Today people think of Eucharist only in terms of those who come to receive Holy Communion. That’s wrong. The ecclesial event, the Church event, the event of celebrating the sacrifice of the Mass, the eternal sacrifice of Christ, wherein as St. Augustine says the “whole Church” offers the “whole Christ” to the Father, that’s primary; and then its fruit is extended to us who come to receive it. But the Mass is offered for everybody, every believer—even believers who aren’t Catholic. That’s the meaning of the Mass.

Matrimony

The meaning of Matrimony—when we have Matrimony we are celebrating the fidelity of God and the power of God that allows people to really remain faithful companions; and then we extend that to a couple, who then bind themselves in God’s love to each other.

Anointing the Sick

Anointing the Sick—the same. We’re celebrating the power of God to anoint and to heal the sick—and we extend it to others through the sacred oil. And so it is with all sacraments; that’s the idea of sacrament.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Now we notice that people don't always experience the power of the Holy Spirit when they receive the sacraments. In fact, sometimes they don't receive it for a long time. And this is, of course, simply what we observe. But there is a way of experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit, and that is called "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," first mentioned in Acts, Chapter 10, with the baptism of Cornelius, when Gentiles were baptized in power before they even had faith. That's one way. Now the thing is—this is the point I want to make—that in Acts it appears to be a spontaneous action of the Holy Spirit. That's the way it's described in the first case. Some people today think just the same way: well, that's just whatever happened then, and now we don't have to think about it anymore. But that isn't the way they thought about it in the early Church.

In the Early Church

In the early Church and for many centuries they regarded baptism in the Holy Spirit as part and parcel of what it was to become Catholic—part and parcel! It wasn't something oh, well, if later on the Holy Spirit or if before the Holy Spirit, or whatever. See, somewhere along the line we've lost that sense that the power of the Holy Spirit really belongs to all the members of the Church—the power and the gifts. That's part of what God wills us to have, and that's part of what makes us Church. It is a mediated experience. By mediated I mean it comes through the body of believers.

I'm not speaking of what people call the "born again" experience. I want to make that very clear. What people call the "born again" experience might be something totally different. My sister-in-law claims that she was born again or felt she was born again as she joined a Mormon Church. And I believe that she had that experience. But what does that mean? I don't know. Theologically I can't make any sense of it. I don't really believe the Holy Spirit was involved in the Mormon Church. I believe she had an experience she called being "born again." But if you really listen to people when they talk about being born again, it's very individualistic. It's not mediated from a body of people. It's very individualistic. It may or may not be associated with Christ. Well, I don't know what it is! But it's not baptism of the Holy Spirit!

Outpouring of the Gifts

Baptism of the Holy Spirit is mediated by the body of Christ. It belongs to the believers, and was always accepted as basic in the very beginning of the Church. We see that there is an outpouring of the gifts for the building up of the Church. What are the gifts as they're mentioned in Scripture itself? Adoration, praise, prayer, which strengthen the contemplative dimension of the Christian Church. What is really the ultimate dimension? Why are we all doing this? Why are we really in the Church? One of the ways the Church has looked at this is we are being formed into contemplatives. Being contemplative is not for somebody in a monastery or in a cloister. Being contemplative means we are able to live life in the presence of God—not in control! What is the opposite of control? Contemplation! When we surrender our control to God, we are

contemplative. How do we surrender our control to God? Through the power of the Holy Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit operate in our lives? Well, there are many ways, chiefly through the sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Matrimony, Anointing the Sick, Penance, Holy Orders. These are ways in which the outpouring takes place, but we can receive those signs in the context of the Church and not experience the power—or sometimes we do! When we do, that’s the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That’s called the “second baptism.”

Gifts of Service

We see gifts of service animating the early Church to live a life of holiness committed to justice—we see that today too. People who are open to the power of the Holy Spirit are committed to justice. They live a life which is not a life of the flesh; it’s a life of commitment to God in holiness. We see in people who are touched by the power of the Holy Spirit a docility to the Spirit. We see in them an expectant faith, that they believe in what Scripture says: “Pray for whatever you will and it will be granted.” They believe it, and they are granted what they pray for, not always to their specifications; but of course part of yielding to the Spirit is letting God specify exactly what we need. But clearly the power of prayer is alive in people who have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit.

God Intervenes in Our Lives

People who have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in the early Church and today know that God does intervene in our lives. Our daily life is not God’s work. Let’s face it. Jesus says pray “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth.” Why do we pray “Thy will be done on earth”? Because it isn’t being done on earth. What happens on earth has happened because somebody else did something. You are in a car crash because some idiot ran into you! It’s not the will of God. People talk about the permissive will of God. Jesus didn’t talk about the permissive will of God. When he said the “will of God,” he meant what God really wanted! I don’t know when we started talking about the permissive will of God—“Oh, God permits this.” True enough, God permits everything or it wouldn’t happen; but it’s not what he wants! It’s not his will in Jesus’ sense of the word. We pray for the will of God to be done. It is always done in the power of the Holy Spirit by really our transformation. And we have to be transformed from inside first, then outside. And gradually the world can be changed. The world has to be changed first and then now we’re happy—no, no. We become happy first then we are the instruments of God changing the world—docility to the Spirit—expectant faith in God’s intervening power. That’s the same as the Exodus. God intervened in Exodus. Go read the Book of Exodus. God intervened to save his people—it’s an intervention—it’s not the course of events. The course of events is not God’s will. This you have to get straight in your mind. If you don’t, it will poison your relationship with God.

Zeal for the Gospel

Fourthly, we see in the early Church and in the present Church those who are baptized in the Holy Spirit have zeal for the gospel. And they have a respect for people who are superior to them. By that I mean the authorities in Church. And they have a respect for people who are equal to them or inferior. That is a gift of the Spirit. A person who has been touched by the Spirit has a reverence and respect for everyone. Reverence is one of the gifts of the Spirit. “And we are to reverence one another in Christ: thinking each other as superior to ourselves.” Is that not what St. Paul said? Is this not his instruction?

Part of the Initiation into the Life of Christ

So baptism in the Holy Spirit is part of initiation into the life of Christ. Without the power and without the gifts our initiation is not finished! I don't care if we're 95 years old! Our initiation is not finished until the power of the Holy Spirit has come into our lives. Why? Jesus was baptized by the Spirit. Jesus baptizes with the Spirit. John practically said so: “One who is coming who will baptize in the Holy Spirit and fire.” He said—“and fire”! Well, fire is a good word to use because anyone who has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit has experienced fire! In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12, it says, “In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.” And Paul mentions several things: first, sanctification, that is, he talks about what people used to be like. He says, “Now that's what you used to be like; but now you're different; you're transformed; you're sanctified in Christ.” That's the power of the Holy Spirit.

New and Experiential Relationship with God

He talks about a new and experiential relationship with God. New and experiential relationship—we are to have an experience of God that we can touch and feel. That's the power of the Holy Spirit. We don't get that on our own. The power of the Holy Spirit brings us a relationship we can taste, we can touch, we can feel with God. We now call God “Abba.” And that's what Jesus taught his disciples. We really can, as mentioned in Galatians, Chapter 4, we can really call God “Abba.” And we can pray always. Now we can't pray always in our physical bodies. St. Paul does say, “Pray always.” What does he mean? “Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary”—no! He means pray in the Spirit. You can't pray with your body always. You can't pray with your mouth always. You can't pray with your voice always. You can't pray with your mind always, but you can pray with your spirit always. Why? Because the Spirit is the one who is praying. The Spirit makes up for what is lacking in our petitions, St. Paul explains.

Fruits of the Spirit

And Paul mentions the fruit of the Spirit. What are the fruits of the Spirit? Well, a few of them are love, joy, peace. Do you know anybody who knows how to get peace? The world is dying for peace; but they don't know where to get it, and they sink into despair. How about joy? Is there a medicine made now that we can get some joy out of

it? Well, people look for it. They want it—or it's things, or it's money, or it's vacations, or something. But then they go on vacation and they're all dreary and blah [Father droops and sways back and forth]. So where do we get this joy? The Holy Spirit!

Plus courageous boldness—courageous boldness! To do what? To witness—this is almost the most important thing. In fact St. Paul says, “If we have been baptized in Christ, we have died. If we have died, we have to be courageous and bold in proclaiming the death”—especially in the Roman Empire where to do so meant you were going to be arrested and thrown into prison and probably killed! And why should you want to do that? Really, why shouldn't you want—if you have received the Holy Spirit there is no problem. Now this is a new kind of life; it's not living for oneself. It's not living with fear of death, which kept the world in bondage. I should say, oh yes, “The devil kept the world in bondage by the fear of death.” See? How can we be in bondage by the fear of death? By living our own little life, but not by living in Christ, where there is no fear of death and there is, in fact, courageous boldness.

Plus prophecy, praise, healing, and other gifts. People are being healed today because there are lots of people who have received the Holy Spirit and in their boldness they pray for healing. And it does take place. And why is all this happening? Just so that the Church can do what Jesus told it to do, to carry on the work of proclaiming the message of love, justice and peace to the world. That's our job!

Needs to Be Rekindled

Now the Spirit is inexhaustible, and therefore we constantly have to—it's not like, well, now I've got the Spirit, but I'll give it to you if you want it—oh no! I don't have the Spirit—“the Spirit has me” is a better way of saying it. The Spirit has us—if it does, if we let it have us! So it needs to be constantly sought. And sometimes it has to be rekindled, even in biblical times—even in biblical times! So don't feel too bad—don't feel too bad if your life seems rather dull. Even in biblical times the Spirit had to be rekindled.

Teachings of the Early Fathers of the Church

Now I want to just mention a few things about the early Fathers. The early Fathers, many attested to the great importance of baptism in the Holy Spirit as part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian or a Catholic. Origen, Justin Martyr, Didymus the Blind, Cyril of Jerusalem, Tertullian, Hilary of Poitiers, John Chrysostom, John of Apamea, and many others. And I want to read just very shortly from *Fanning the Flame*, which is a wonderful book. I recommend it to all of you—edited by Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague. It is on the Holy Spirit in the Church. And on that page—we read on page 16—this is what Tertullian says, “Therefore, you blessed ones,”—he's talking to those who are being baptized, or have been baptized—“Therefore, you blessed ones, for whom the grace of God is waiting,”—oh, I guess they have not been baptized yet—“when you come up from the most sacred bath of the new birth, when you spread out your hands for the first time in your mother's house [the Church] with your brethren, ask your Father,

ask your Lord, for the special gift of his inheritance, the distribution of charisms, which form an additional, underlying feature [of Baptism]. ‘Ask,’ he says, ‘and you shall receive.’ In fact, you have sought it and it has been added to you.” So it’s very clear that this was an expectation in the early Church.

John of Apamea says—he too refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the second baptism. Why? Because very often it was distant from the first one—in time. Now it doesn’t require any rite. It doesn’t require any special words. It requires only two things: our willingness to receive it, and asking for it. Now one of the things he says about it is “In the second baptism one takes possession perfectly of the power of holy Baptism.” In other words they were aware even in the early Church that people could receive sacramental Baptism, and they acknowledged that the Spirit was at work already, that the work had been started, a seed had been planted, but they also knew that it might not show much growth for quite a while, and that it still had to show that the growth was due now in the life of the living Christian, not just when you die and then something happens, but now in anticipation of the glory to come!

Loss of Original Fervor

Now St. John Chrysostom—I’m reaching the end, so if you are getting a little tired, don’t worry—John Chrysostom was an archbishop of Constantinople in about the fourth century. He said, rather regretfully, “The Church is like an old lady who has lost all of her splendor.” And what he is referring to—and as he says, “We know that in the past, in the recent past, the Church was full of the gifts of the Spirit and the power and the energy of the spirit, and now it’s kind of getting dull, and the people are getting bedraggled”—he didn’t use that word. But why did that happen? Now I can’t tell you for sure why, but I have a few suspicions.

Number one, by the time John Chrysostom is talking, guess what’s happened? The persecutions have ceased. And in the days of the early apostles and for several hundred years up until the time of Constantine, 313, to be a Christian meant you might just die very soon because it was against the law; it was a capital punishment. Okay? So anybody who submitted to Baptism and professed their faith, they had to really believe and they had to really be committed. There was no iffy hemming and hawing in the early Church. And every believer was putting his or her life on the line. By the time John Chrysostom comes around the emperor had become a Christian—for goodness sakes! And now everybody wanted to be a Christian. But why? Is it really cleaning the inside of the cup anymore or is it something else? One possible reason is a lack of true motivation in the first place in receiving the sacraments and entering into the Church.

The Inner Church of Christ

And then St. Augustine comes by and he writes the story, *The City of God*. What’s he talking about? He says that the difference between the Church of Christ and the external Church, which he calls the Catholic Church, is “The Catholic Church has existed since the time of Adam and Eve”—but I don’t want to go into that—but he says, “There has

always been an outward sign of the presence of God, but the inner Church of Christ—that's different." He says, "Who is really in the inner Church of Christ?" He says, "I don't know. And no one knows. I hope I am; I hope I will be when I die." But he says, "I'm not sure." He's going back to the inner-outer thing. Let's be clear about this—it's not the same. The Second Vatican Council reiterated that idea. It said, "The true Church of Christ, the truly saved one subsists within the Catholic Church." And then the Council admitted, "And even extends beyond the Catholic Church." But it's not identical with the external institutional Church. That's Augustine's thought. But again even in Augustine's day, of course, which is later than St John or almost the same time as St. John, there is that idea of a certain lack of enthusiasm and fervor and power and gifts.

Misconceptions

Now mind you, Augustine himself had a very peculiar reason for this, and one I don't approve of. He said it was because God didn't want to give it anymore—he actually said that! And that is the basis for the fundamentalist opinion. I don't know if you ever heard of Fundamentalism or the theology of fundamentalist thought called "Dispensationalism." John Nelson Darby wrote a book in the early 1900's or late 1800's about the dispensations. He got that idea from Augustine. Augustine said, "Look, in the early apostolic period we needed signs and wonders; we needed the power of prayer; we needed all these wonderful miracles, but now we don't need them anymore, so God won't give them." That is not really true. Not all of Augustine's ideas were good.

I'll tell you another one he had. He had a terrible idea. He said that he was totally against miracles and the use of relics, and he used to preach against the use of relics. And of course, you know what? His faithful subjects didn't listen. And one day there was a procession on the feast of St. Stephen, a procession with the bones of St. Stephen. And Augustine did not approve of this at all, but he watched it. And while he watched it, he saw people being healed—in front of his own eyes—when they came to the bone of St. Stephen and prayed in the Spirit. "And about this," he said, "I shall say no more." He realized he was wrong—he realized he was wrong! Probably one of the best things he ever said was, "I shall say no more." Unfortunately, future bishops and theologians—he was both a bishop and a theologian—future bishops and theologians have not always followed his very good example of not speaking on things they don't know anything about! And there have been plenty of people who have kind of followed his idea, well, we don't need the Holy Spirit anymore, or we don't need the power of the Holy Spirit anymore, or we don't need miracles anymore, or we don't need the energy anymore of the Holy Spirit. Well, I just have to say they're wrong! I believe they're wrong! And I believe they should say no more about that. They should listen to what the Scriptures say and what the early Fathers say.

Our Blind Spots

Now I said I would say something about another reason why. To do that I would like to turn to Scripture for a moment. You know what? I shortened this quite a bit. I had a lot of quotations I didn't read to you. I kind of told you the content. You look like a

trusting group. But if you really want to stay, I have another hour's worth. But there is something I do want to read to you, and it's in Matthew's gospel. It's the Beatitudes. You know, I told you earlier that if we look inside us into that cup, we won't see the loot we won't see the lust, the greed, we won't see the sloth, we won't see the gluttony, we won't see the anger. We only see everyone else's. The envy, the pride—we don't see those things in ourselves. Jesus knew that. So instead of saying well, now sit down here and look inside yourself and then make a good confession, because he knew it would be fruitless. He said he would give us a mirror that would reflect what God really wants to see in us. He called this mirror the "Beatitudes."

The Beatitudes: A Mirror

And I believe that when the Church became imperial, when the emperor said, "I think it's great to be a Christian"—not that Constantine really rushed to be baptized! He was baptized on his deathbed. But what he did in 313, he gave up persecuting the Church. When the Church kind of became the "in thing," and a lot of people came into the Church for questionable reasons, something happened to the early enthusiasm and motivation and purity of the Church. And ever since the Church has been handed down from generation after generation—in the normal way through teaching, through sharing, through parents teaching children, through people hearing sermons, and through looking at stained glass windows in cathedrals, and various ways—but not always do we understand the inner meaning of it. That takes a little bit more. Now there have been many who have plumbed the depths of their souls, but often we don't.

So Jesus knew that would happen. So he said, "I'll tell you really what is wonderful, what is true happiness." And then you could look at this, and then look at yourself and see: Well, is this true of me? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Now can you really say that about yourself? Are you really poor in spirit? Some people think—oh, poor in spirit—that means I still have money, but I'm not attached to it. No. I don't know. I think poor in spirit means more than just being poor in fact, because people who are poor in fact might be very greedy. They might really want more. They might want what they don't have or can't have. So is that a blessing? No. Being poor in spirit means to really recognize that happiness can only come from God and can only be an inner gift from the Holy Spirit. The things cannot make us happy. The promotions cannot make us happy. That we cannot and ought not judge ourselves in any sort of quantifiable way. This has become an epidemic in our modern society—judging things on the basis of quantity.

Recently I read in the paper some group of idiots who had tried to decide how many people volunteered in various churches—Baptist, Sons of God, Catholic—how many people volunteer how many hours. Now I ask you, who keeps track of how many hours people volunteer in the church? Nobody keeps track of that; it is unknowable! And yet somebody is figuring it out. You know what they say, "Figures don't lie, but there are a lot of liars figuring!" Why does anyone want to know that? It can't be known in the first place, but it's a terrible idea. It's almost diabolical to try to put into hours a gift of self. And they did worse than that! They then decided it was worth \$9.20 an hour, and they

tried to find a dollar value for volunteers. This is living in the flesh! This is measuring everything.

This says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The poor in spirit recognize that the value of ourselves cannot be measured. The value of what we do for God is immeasurable. That’s why Jesus says, “When you pray, go to your room; shut your door.” It’s not how many hours you spend in church. It’s not how many rosaries. It’s the quality of what you’re giving to God. “Go to your room; shut your door. When you fast, don’t let people see it.” Make it an inner thing. If you want to fast, fast; but don’t let other people know you’re fasting. Make it an inner gift to God. And God who knows what is done in secret will reward you. The poor in spirit know that God will reward them. That’s the essence of being poor in spirit—God will reward me.

Now today this is destroying families because there are all kinds of—for example, I have heard people say, “Well, how being a housewife is nothing, because I don’t get paid for it!” Well, that’s pathetic to think this way. Being of service to a family should not be measured; and if you even try to, you miss the whole point. Likewise, of course, when somebody does work in the world, his or her work is not measurable either. Do we really believe that a person who earns, you know, takes home—I can’t believe anyone really earns—you know, \$800,000! But that’s what CEOs in our country now are making, on the average of \$800,000. Do they earn it? That’s debatable! Are they more valuable than somebody who earns \$20,000? Of course not! Measurable things have nothing to do with value, and therefore with money—it has nothing to do with money. That’s why it says in 1 Timothy, “The love of money is the root of all evil.” It could have also said the love of quantity is the root of all evil; the love of measurement is the root of all evil. No. What is really real is not measurable. It is the quality, it is the spirit, the human spirit and the spiritual qualities that we possess, which become unleashed and sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit within us; and we become a gift, a charism to the Church, when we open ourselves in service. All right.

“Blessed are they who mourn.” Now, you know, what is so blessed about mourning? Well, do we really mourn? Are we really able to share with others? St. Paul says, “Weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice.” That’s living in the Spirit.

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” Do we really and truly hunger for righteousness? Now I don’t think we do. I think we hunger to get even, to get our share, to get our due. It’s easy to feel cheated. It’s the easiest feeling to come by: I’ve been cheated and I deserve more! I got the short end of the stick! Is that thirsting for righteousness? No, it’s not. Thirsting for righteousness has to do with the world that God has created, the kingdom that God wants to bring into the world, which has nothing to do with my feelings of being cheated; and it’s really thirsting that all of us can share in the blessings that God has for us—spiritual and material—because even the goods of the earth are a blessing from the Lord, and we should all be sharing them.

“Blessed are the merciful, they shall be shown mercy.” We need to be with that. How are we—we’re all offended. I’m offended all the time. But the question is, Do we dwell

upon that or do we recognize really and truly that our being offended is really our own sensitivity? Now it's not a bad thing. You don't want to be so callous that nobody can offend you—right? Do you? Do you want to be someone who is like a stone? No. But on the other hand, being sensitive is not exactly one hundred percent virtuous either! It's how do you use your sensitivity? To cater to yourself? If Jesus accused the Pharisees—I didn't read this; I was going to read a lot from Scripture, but there is this long passage in Chapter 22 of Matthew, and he accused them of being self-indulgent. We're self-indulgent sometimes. We indulge in our feeling of “me.” But if we are merciful, we don't. We forgive others; we accept them as they are—that's what it means to be merciful. We don't expect other people to change. We don't expect other people to live the life we want them to live. We just accept them the way they are even—and this is the hardest thing—even when we see what they are doing is not really good even for themselves. It's bad enough that it's not good for us, but it's not even good for them; but we accept them as they are. This is merciful. God is merciful. God accepts us as we are. Then he invites us into new life. Now what we have to realize is that we have to accept each other and we can help people see that God has invited them, but we can't—it's not our power that will change them; it's only God's power. And can we wait patiently? Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Do we really think we don't need it ourselves? “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

“Blessed are the peacemakers.”

“Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness.” We pay the price.

Repentance

This is a simple way Jesus has of letting us look inside ourselves. Can we say we live the Beatitudes? If we live the Beatitudes, then we are living the life of the Spirit. If we don't, we need repentance—pure and simple—conversion, a new life! It's that simple. And don't think that repentance has to do with confessing you broke one of the commandments! It's much deeper. It's I'm not living the Beatitudes, and I want to live the Beatitudes. And if you tonight can look into yourself and you can see that you have not always been meek or poor in spirit or hungry for righteousness or a peacemaker, then you need to come to the Lord and say, “Lord, I want to!” That's repentance, in the Greek “metanoia”—I believe that's how we pronounce it now. “Metanoia” means a new mind. About what? About who we are. And if what I've said tonight—if you say, “Well, I never heard that before,” good! Then you'll have a chance to have a new mind. Because you might have heard it before actually and not heard it—you know what I mean? There's hearing and hearing. There's hearing with the ears, and there's hearing with the heart. If tonight you're hearing with your heart, it's time for metanoia. It's time for a new mind about yourself and about life.

Ask God for the Power of the Holy Spirit

And then secondly this: ask God—ask God—for the power of the Holy Spirit. I'm sure that God wants every single one of you to be brimming over with the energy and the peace and the love and the power and the charisms of the Holy Spirit. It's for everybody. And tonight, if you want, there is somebody here who will pray with you. Don't feel forced. It's just an offer.

Conclusion: A Poem

And in conclusion I have a prayer, and this prayer is from a bishop of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It's not exactly a prayer. It's more of a poem. He says,

“Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away
Christ stays in the past,
the Gospel is a dead letter,
the church is simply an organization,
authority a matter of domination,
mission a matter of propaganda,
the liturgy no more than an evocation,
Christian living a slave morality.”

—Pretty powerful. I think it's absolutely true! Now—

“But in the Holy Spirit:

the cosmos is resurrected and groans with
the birth-pangs of the kingdom,
the risen Christ is there,
the Gospel is the power of life,
the church shows forth life of the Trinity,
authority is a liberating service,
mission is a Pentecost,
the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation,
[of the blessings to come in the eternal banquet]
human action is deified.”¹

—Now that's a Greek concept from the Fathers. The Greek Fathers talk about deifying, making godlike human action. This is God's gift to us, the first fruits of those who believe.

Thank you for coming.

Endnotes

¹ Metropolitan Ignatios of Latakia, “Main Theme Address,” *The Uppsala Report* 1968 (Geneva: WCC, 1969) 298

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