

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

The Mansion Within Pentecost Sunday, June 9, 2019 Acts 1:1-11;
1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13; Jn 20:19-23 (We will only ask for the Holy Spirit when we have
seen through, had enough of, or become tired of the same old offers of the world.)

St. Teresa of Avila says that the human soul is like a mansion with many rooms full of light and art and beauty and space, and yet most people live in the basement. Of course when she is referring to light, beauty, and art she means **the work of the Holy Spirit elevating our awareness, illuminating our minds, lifting our feelings into freer, lighter, more wholesome emotions that are all rooted in divine love.** The basement on the other hand is the base, where we start, the beginning of our awareness; and in the beginning we struggle all by ourselves to fit in, to succeed, to negotiate relationships, all without the light of the Holy Spirit. Some people, whether through talent or good fortune, may actually succeed for a while, but sooner or later a solo flight ends in disaster because we are not created for ourselves. We are not created to overcome others or attain mastery over the world or other people. **The only true goal for our free will is self-mastery, and we cannot attain that without the help of the Holy Spirit.** And that help we call grace. The Holy Spirit is the source of all grace, and **through its companionship and friendship we can attain the lofty life we are created for,** which St. Teresa called living in the **mansions** or sometimes called the **interior castles.** It does not describe houses we build, but rather **houses we are and abide within.**

Some may wonder why the Spirit is not automatically released in their lives. But Jesus taught, and I quote from Luke's Gospel: "If you with all your sins know how to give good things to your children, how much more will the Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" So have we asked? As with all matters of the heart the issue is desire. **We won't ask for the Holy Spirit if we don't desire the Holy Spirit.** But desires can be easily subverted. This is part of our

human weakness. Saul on the road to Damascus didn't actually know what he wanted, but in an unaware way, in a wild and unknown way he was actually seeking Christ, whom he then found.

But **we live in a culture that from early childhood finds ways of promising us happiness if only we buy this or that.** Consumerism can derail our spiritual development by substituting things for the real thing that Saul was relentlessly pursuing unawares on the road to Damascus. It's one thing to advertise a car because it's sturdy or economical or of superior engineering, all of which could be true; but it's quite another matter to pretend, as many commercials do, that some particular car will actually bring happiness and fulfillment and even a greater enjoyment of nature in its wake. And this brings us to a very sober question: **how much deception and falsehood is part and parcel of modern life?**

If we want the best God has to offer, first we have to **clear away all the counterfeit claims of our materialistic society.** We have to see clearly how bogus is the claim that anything at all can or could make us happy. This means confronting what St. Thomas Aquinas calls **the four false gods: money, power, fame, and pleasure.** That is a pretty good summary of what the world offers. It's a little surprising that the modern world, which is so creative, can't find anything else to offer; it's the same old four false gods. **We will only ask for the Holy Spirit when we have seen through, had enough of, or become tired of the same old offers of the world.** Teilhard de Chardin said, **"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience."** That's putting things in right order. The Holy Spirit is our advocate and friend helping us find our true identity, which can only be found in God.