

ENCYCLICAL LETTER

***Dominum et
vivificantem***

Of the Supreme Pontiff

JOHN PAUL II

On the Holy Spirit
In the Life of the Church and the
World

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
PART I: THE SPIRIT OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON, GIVEN TO THE CHURCH	6
1. Jesus' Promise and Revelation at the Last Supper	6
2. Father, Son and Holy Spirit	10
3. The Salvific Self-Giving of God in the Holy Spirit	11
4. The Messiah, Anointed with the Holy Spirit	14
5. Jesus of Nazareth, "Exalted" in the Holy Spirit	17
6. The Risen Christ Says: "Receive the Holy Spirit"	20
7. The Holy Spirit and the Era of the Church	23
PART II: THE SPIRIT WHO CONVINCES THE WORLD CONCERNING SIN	26
1. Sin, Righteousness and Judgment	26
2. The Testimony of the Day of Pentecost	29
3. The Witness Concerning the Beginning: the Original Reality of Sin	33
4. The Spirit Who Transforms Suffering into Salvific Love	38
5. The Blood that Purifies the Conscience	42
6. The Sin Against the Holy Spirit	48
PART III: THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES LIFE	50
1. Reason for the Jubilee of the Year 2000: Christ Who Was Conceived of the Holy Spirit	50
2. Reason for the Jubilee: Grace Has Been Made Manifest	50
3. The Holy Spirit in Man's Inner Conflict: "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh"	50
4. The Holy Spirit Strengthens the "Inner Man"	50
5. The Church as the Sacrament of Intimate Union with God	50
6. The Spirit and the Bride Say: "Come!"	50
CONCLUSION	50

*Venerable Brothers, Beloved Sons and Daughters,
Health and the Apostolic Blessing!*

INTRODUCTION

1. The Church professes her faith in the Holy Spirit as "the Lord, the giver of life." She professes this in the Creed which is called Nicene-Constantinopolitan from the name of the two Councils -- of Nicæa (AD 325) and Constantinople (AD 381) -- at which it was formulated or promulgated. It also contains the statement that the Holy Spirit "has spoken through the Prophets."

These are words which the Church receives from the very source of her faith, Jesus Christ. In fact, according to the Gospel of John, the Holy Spirit is given to us with the new life, as Jesus foretells and promises on the great day of the Feast of Tabernacles: "If any one thirst let him come to me and drink. He who believeth in me as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"¹ And the Evangelist explains: "This he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive."² It is the same simile of water which Jesus uses in his conversation with the Samaritan woman, when he speaks of "a spring of water welling up to eternal life,"³ and in his conversation with Nicodemus when he speaks of the need for a new birth "of water and the Holy Spirit" in order to "enter the kingdom of God."⁴

The Church, therefore, instructed by the words of Christ, and drawing on the experience of Pentecost and her own apostolic history, has proclaimed since the earliest centuries her faith in the Holy Spirit, as the giver of life, the one in whom the inscrutable Triune God

¹ Jn 7:37f.

² Jn 7:39.

³ Jn 4:14; cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 4.

⁴ Cf. Jn 3:5.

communicates himself to human beings, constituting in them the source of eternal life.

2. This faith, uninterruptedly professed by the Church, needs to be constantly reawakened and deepened in the consciousness of the People of God. In the course of the last hundred years this has been done several times: by Leo XIII, who published the Encyclical Epistle *Divinum Illud Munus* (1897) entirely devoted to the Holy Spirit; by Pius XII, who in the Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis* (1943) spoke of the Holy Spirit as the vital principle of the Church, in which he works in union with the Head of the Mystical Body, Christ;⁵ at the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council which brought out the need for a new study of the doctrine on the Holy Spirit, as Paul VI emphasised: "The Christology and particularly the ecclesiology of the Council must be succeeded by a new study of and devotion to the Holy Spirit, precisely as the indispensable complement to the teaching of the Council."⁶

In our own age, then, we are called anew by the ever ancient and ever new faith of the Church, to draw near to the Holy Spirit as the giver of life. In this we are helped and stimulated also by the heritage we share with the Oriental Churches, which have jealously guarded the extraordinary riches of the teachings of the Fathers on the Holy Spirit. For this reason too we can say that one of the most important ecclesial events of recent years has been the Sixteenth Centenary of the First Council of Constantinople, celebrated simultaneously in Constantinople and Rome on the Solemnity of Pentecost in 1981. The Holy Spirit was then better seen, through a meditation on the mystery of the Church, as the one who points out the ways leading to the union of Christians, indeed as the supreme source of this unity, which comes from God himself and to which St. Paul gave a particular expression in the words which are frequently used to begin the Eucharistic liturgy: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."⁷

In a certain sense, my previous Encyclicals *Redemptor Hominis* and *Dives in Misericordia* took their origin and inspiration from this exhortation, celebrating as they do the event of our salvation accomplished in the Son, sent by the Father into the world "that the world might be saved through him"⁸ and "every tongue confess that

⁵ Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical *Divinum Illud Munus* (May 9, 1897): *Acta Leonis*, 17 (1898), pp. 125-148; Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (June 29, 1943): AAS 35 (1943), pp. 193-248.

⁶ General Audience of June 6, 1973: *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, XI (1973), 477.

⁷ Roman Missal; cf. 2 Cor 13:13.

⁸ Jn 3:17.

Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."⁹ From this exhortation now comes the present Encyclical on the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; with the Father and the Son he is adored and glorified: a divine Person, he is at the centre of the Christian faith and is the source and dynamic power of the Church's renewal.¹⁰ The Encyclical has been drawn from the heart of the heritage of the Council. For the Conciliar texts, thanks to their teaching on the Church in herself and the Church in the world, move us to penetrate ever deeper into the Trinitarian mystery of God himself, through the Gospels, the Fathers and the liturgy: to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

In this way the Church is also responding to certain deep desires which she believes she can discern in people's hearts today: a fresh discovery of God in his transcendent reality as the infinite Spirit, just as Jesus presents him to the Samaritan woman; the need to adore him "in spirit and truth";¹¹ the hope of finding in him the secret of love and the power of a "new creation":¹² yes, precisely the giver of life.

The Church feels herself called to this mission of proclaiming the Spirit, while together with the human family she approaches the end of the second Millennium after Christ. Against the background of a heaven and earth which will "pass away," she knows well that "the words which will not pass away"¹³ acquire a particular eloquence. They are the words of Christ about the Holy Spirit, the inexhaustible source of the "water welling up to eternal life,"¹⁴ as truth and saving grace. Upon these words she wishes to reflect, to these words she wishes to call the attention of believers and of all people, as she prepares to celebrate -- as will be said later on -- the great Jubilee which will mark the passage from the second to the third Christian Millennium.

Naturally, the considerations that follow do not aim to explore exhaustively the extremely rich doctrine on the Holy Spirit, nor to favour any particular solution of questions which are still open. Their main purpose is to develop in the Church the awareness that "she is compelled by the Holy Spirit to do her part towards the full realization

⁹ Phil 2:11.

¹⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 4; John Paul II, Address to Those Taking Part in the International Congress on Pneumatology (March 26, 1982), I: *Insegnamenti* V/1 (1982), p. 1004.

¹¹ Cf. Jn 4:24.

¹² Cf. Rom 8:22; Gal 6:15.

¹³ Cf. Mt 24:35.

¹⁴ Jn 4:14.

of the will of God, who has established Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world."¹⁵

PART I: THE SPIRIT OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON, GIVEN TO THE CHURCH

1. Jesus' Promise and Revelation at the Last Supper

3. When the time for Jesus to leave this world had almost come, he told the Apostles of "another Counsellor."¹⁶ The evangelist John, who was present, writes that, during the Last Supper before the day of his Passion and Death, Jesus addressed the Apostles with these words: "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.... I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth."¹⁷

It is precisely this Spirit of truth whom Jesus calls the Paraclete -- and *parakletos* means "counsellor," and also "intercessor," or "advocate." And he says that the Paraclete is "another" Counsellor, the second one, since he, Jesus himself, is the first Counsellor,¹⁸ being the first bearer and giver of the Good News. The Holy Spirit comes after him and because of him, in order to continue in the world, through the Church,

¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n.17.

¹⁶ *Allon parakleton*: Jn 14:16.

¹⁷ Jn 14:13, 16f.

¹⁸ Cf. 1 Jn 2:1.

the work of the Good News of salvation. Concerning this continuation of his own work by the Holy Spirit Jesus speaks more than once during the same farewell discourse, preparing the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room for his departure, namely for his Passion and Death on the Cross.

The words to which we will make reference here are found in the Gospel of John. Each one adds a new element to that prediction and promise. And at the same time they are intimately interwoven, not only from the viewpoint of the events themselves but also from the viewpoint of the mystery of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which perhaps in no passage of Sacred Scripture finds so emphatic an expression as here.

4. A little while after the prediction just mentioned Jesus adds: "But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."¹⁹ The Holy Spirit will be the Counsellor of the Apostles and the Church, always present in their midst -- even though invisible -- as the teacher of the same Good News that Christ proclaimed. The words "he will teach" and "bring to remembrance" mean not only that he, in his own particular way, will continue to inspire the spreading of the Gospel of salvation but also that he will help people to understand the correct meaning of the content of Christ's message; they mean that he will ensure continuity and identity of understanding in the midst of changing conditions and circumstances. The Holy Spirit, then, will ensure that in the Church there will always continue the same truth which the Apostles heard from their Master.
5. In transmitting the Good News, the Apostles will be in a special way associated with the Holy Spirit. This is how Jesus goes on: "When the Counsellor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning."²⁰

Apostles were the direct eyewitnesses. They "have heard" and "have seen with their own eyes," "have looked upon" and even "touched with their hands" Christ, as the evangelist John says in another passage.²¹ This human, first-hand and "historical" witness to Christ is linked to the witness of the Holy Spirit: "He will bear witness to me." In the

¹⁹ Jn 14:26.

²⁰ Jn 15:26f.

²¹ Cf. 1 Jn 1:1-3; 4:14.

witness of the Spirit of truth, the human testimony of the Apostles will find its strongest support. And subsequently it will also find therein the hidden foundation of its continuation among the generations of Christ's disciples and believers who succeed one another down through the ages.

The supreme and most complete revelation of God to humanity is Jesus Christ himself, and the witness of the Spirit inspires, guarantees and convalidates the faithful transmission of this revelation in the preaching and writing of the Apostles,²² while the witness of the Apostles ensures its human expression in the Church and in the history of humanity.

6. This is also seen from the strict correlation of content and intention with the just-mentioned prediction and promise, a correlation found in the next words of the text of John: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."²³

In his previous words Jesus presents the; Counsellor, the Spirit of truth, as the one who "will teach" and "bring to remembrance," as the one who "will bear witness" to him. Now he says: "He will guide you into all the truth." This "guiding into all the truth," referring to what the Apostles "cannot bear now," is necessarily connected with Christ's self-emptying through his Passion and Death on the Cross, which, when he spoke these words, was just about to happen.

Later however it becomes clear that this "guiding into all the truth" is connected not only with the scandal of the Cross, but also with everything that Christ "did and taught."²⁴ For the mystery of Christ taken as a whole demands faith, since it is faith that adequately introduces man into the reality of the revealed mystery. The guiding into all the truth" is therefore achieved in faith and through faith: and this is the work of the Spirit of truth and the result of his action in man. Here the Holy Spirit is to be man's supreme guide and the light of the human spirit. This holds true for the Apostles, the eyewitnesses, who

²² "The divinely revealed truths, which are contained and expressed in the books of the Sacred Scripture, were written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit," and thus the same Sacred Scripture must be "read and interpreted with the help of the same Spirit by means of whom it was written": Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, nn. 11, 12.

²³ Jn 16:12f.

²⁴ Acts 1:1.

must now bring to all people the proclamation of what Christ did and taught, and especially the proclamation of his Cross and Resurrection. Taking a longer view, this also holds true for all the generations of disciples and confessors of the Master. Since they will have to accept with faith and confess with candour the mystery of God at work in human history, the revealed mystery which explains the definitive meaning of that history.

7. Between the Holy Spirit and Christ there thus subsists, in the economy of salvation, an intimate bond, whereby the Spirit works in human history as "another Counsellor," permanently ensuring the transmission and spreading of the Good News revealed by Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, in the Holy Spirit-Paraclete, who in the mystery and action of the Church unceasingly continues the historical presence on earth of the Redeemer and his saving work, the glory of Christ shines forth, as the following words of John attest: "He [the Spirit of truth] will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."²⁵ By these words all the preceding statements are once again confirmed: "He will teach..., will bring to your remembrance..., will bear witness." The supreme and complete self-revelation of God, accomplished in Christ and witnessed to by the preaching of the Apostles, continues to be manifested in the Church through the mission of the invisible Counsellor, the Spirit of truth. How intimately this mission is linked with the mission of Christ, how fully it draws from this mission of Christ, consolidating and developing in history its salvific results, is expressed by the verb "take": "He will take what is mine and declare it to you." As if to explain the words "he will take" by clearly expressing the divine and Trinitarian unity of the source, Jesus adds: "All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."²⁶ By the very fact of taking what is "mine," he will draw from "what is the Father's."

In the light of these words "he will take," one can therefore also explain the other significant words about the Holy Spirit spoken by Jesus in the Upper Room before the Passover: "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."²⁷ It will be necessary to return to these words in a separate reflection.

²⁵ Jn 16:14.

²⁶ Jn 16:15.

²⁷ Jn 16:7f.

2. Father, Son and Holy Spirit

8. It is a characteristic of the text of John that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are clearly called Persons, the first distinct from the second and the third, and each of them from one another. Jesus speaks of the Spirit-Counsellor, using several times the personal pronoun "he"; and at the same time, throughout the farewell discourse, he reveals the bonds which unite the Father, the Son and the Paraclete to one another. Thus "the Holy Spirit ... proceeds from the Father"²⁸ and the Father "gives" the Spirit.²⁹ The Father "sends" the Spirit in the name of the Son,³⁰ the Spirit "bears witness" to the Son.³¹ The Son asks the Father to send the Spirit-Counsellor,³² but likewise affirms and promises, in relation to his own "departure" through the Cross: "If I go, I will send him to you."³³ Thus, the Father sends the Holy Spirit in the power of his Fatherhood, as he has sent the Son;³⁴ but at the same time he sends him in the power of the Redemption accomplished by Christ -- and in this sense Holy Spirit is sent also by the Son: "I will send him to you."

Here it should be noted that, while all the other promises made in the Upper Room foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit after Christ's departure, the one contained in the text of John 16:7f. also includes and clearly emphasises the relationship of interdependence which could be called causal between the manifestation of each: "If I go, I will send him to you." The Holy Spirit will come insofar as Christ will depart through the Cross: he will come not only afterwards, but because of the Redemption accomplished by Christ, through the will and action of the Father.

9. Thus in the farewell discourse at the Last Supper, we can say that the highest point of the revelation of the Trinity is reached. At the same time, we are on the threshold of definitive events and final words which in the end will be translated into the great missionary mandate addressed to the Apostles and through them to the Church: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," a mandate which contains, in a certain sense, the Trinitarian formula of baptism: "baptizing them

²⁸ Jn 15:26.

²⁹ Jn 14:16.

³⁰ Jn 14:26.

³¹ Jn 15:26.

³² Jn 14:16.

³³ Jn 16:7.

³⁴ Cf. Jn 3:16f., 34; 6:57; 17:3, 18, 23.

in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."³⁵ The formula reflects the intimate mystery of God, of the divine life, which is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the divine unity of the Trinity. The farewell discourse can be read as a special preparation for this Trinitarian formula, in which is expressed the life-giving power of the Sacrament which brings about sharing in the life of the Triune God, for it gives sanctifying grace as a supernatural gift to man. Through grace, man is called and made "capable" of sharing in the inscrutable life of God.

10. In his intimate life, God "is love,"³⁶ the essential love shared by the three divine Persons: personal love is the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Therefore he "searches even the depths of God,"³⁷ as uncreated Love-Gift. It can be said that in the Holy Spirit the intimate life of the Triune God becomes totally gift, an exchange of mutual love between the divine Persons and that through the Holy Spirit God exists in the mode of gift. It is the Holy Spirit who is the personal expression of this self-giving, of this being-love.³⁸ He is Person-Love. He is Person-Gift. Here we have an inexhaustible treasure of the reality and an inexpressible deepening of the concept of person in God, which only divine Revelation makes known to us.

At the same time, the Holy Spirit, being consubstantial with the Father and the Son in divinity, is love and uncreated gift from which derives as from its source (*fons vivus*) all giving of gifts vis-à-vis creatures (created gift): the gift of existence to all things through creation; the gift of grace to human beings through the whole economy of salvation. As the Apostle Paul writes: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us."³⁹

3. The Salvific Self-Giving of God in the Holy Spirit

11. Christ's farewell discourse at the Last Supper stands in particular reference to this "giving" and "self-giving" of the Holy Spirit. In John's Gospel we have as it were the revelation of the most profound "logic" of

³⁵ Mt 28:19.

³⁶ Cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16

³⁷ Cf. I Cor 2:10.

³⁸ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theo.* Ia, qq. 37-38.

³⁹ Rom 5:5.

the saving mystery contained in God's eternal plan, as an extension of the ineffable communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the divine "logic" which from the mystery of the Trinity leads to the mystery of the Redemption of the world in Jesus Christ. The Redemption accomplished by the Son in the dimensions of the earthly history of humanity -- accomplished in his "departure" through the Cross and Resurrection -- is at the same time, in its entire salvific power, transmitted to the Holy Spirit: the one who "will take what is mine."⁴⁰ The words of the text of John indicate that, according to the divine plan, Christ's "departure" is an indispensable condition for the "sending" and the coming of the Holy Spirit, but these words also say that what begins now is the new salvific self-giving of God, in the Holy Spirit.

12. It is a new beginning in relation to the first, original beginning of God's salvific self-giving, which is identified with the mystery of creation itself. Here is what we read in the very first words of the Book of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..., and the Spirit of God (*ruah Elohim*) was moving over the face of the waters."⁴¹ This biblical concept of creation includes not only the call to existence of the very being of the cosmos, that is to say the giving of existence, but also the presence of the Spirit of God in creation, that is to say the beginning of God's salvific self-communication to the things he creates. This is true first of all concerning man, who has been created in the image and likeness of God: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."⁴² "Let us make": can one hold that the plural which the Creator uses here in speaking of himself already in some way suggests the Trinitarian mystery, the presence of the Trinity in the work of the creation of man? The Christian reader, who already knows the revelation of this mystery, can discern a reflection of it also in these words. At any rate, the context of the Book of Genesis enables us to see in the creation of man the first beginning of God's salvific self-giving commensurate with the "image and likeness" of himself which he has granted to man.
13. It seems then that even the words spoken by Jesus in the farewell discourse should be read again in the light of that "beginning," so long ago yet fundamental, which we know from Genesis. "If I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." Describing his "departure" as a condition for the "coming" of the Counsellor, Christ links the new beginning of God's salvific self-

⁴⁰ Jn 16:14.

⁴¹ Gen 1:lf.

⁴² Gen 1:26.

communication in the Holy Spirit with the mystery of the Redemption. It is a new beginning, first of all because between the first beginning and the whole of human history -- from the original fall onwards -- sin has intervened, sin which is in contradiction to the presence of the Spirit of God in creation, and which is above all in contradiction to God's salvific self-communication to man. St. Paul writes that, precisely because of sin, "creation...was subjected to futility..., has been groaning in travail together until now" and "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God."⁴³

14. Therefore Jesus Christ says in the Upper Room "It is to your advantage I go away; ...if I go, I will send him to you."⁴⁴ The "departure" of Christ through the Cross has the power of the Redemption -- and this also means a new presence of the Spirit of God in creation: the new beginning of God's self-communication to man in the Holy Spirit. "And that you are children is proven by the fact that God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son who cries: Abba, Father!" As the Apostle Paul writes in the Letter to the Galatians.⁴⁵ The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, as the words of the farewell discourse in the Upper Room bear witness. At the same time he is the Spirit of the Son: he is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, as the Apostles and particularly Paul of Tarsus will testify.⁴⁶ With the sending of this Spirit "into our hearts," there begins the fulfilment of that for which "creation waits with eager longing," as we read in the Letter to the Romans.

The Holy Spirit comes at the price of Christ's "departure." While this "departure" caused the Apostles to be sorrowful,⁴⁷ and this sorrow was to reach its culmination in the Passion and Death on Good Friday, "this sorrow will turn into joy."⁴⁸ For Christ will add to this redemptive "departure" the glory of his Resurrection and Ascension to the Father. Thus the sorrow with its underlying joy is, for the Apostles in the context of their Master's "departure," an "advantageous" departure, for thanks to it another "Counsellor" will come.⁴⁹ At the price of the Cross which brings about the Redemption, in the power of the whole Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit comes in order to remain from the day of Pentecost onwards with the Apostles, to remain with the Church and in the Church, and through her in the world.

⁴³ Rom 8:19-22.

⁴⁴ Jn 16:7.

⁴⁵ Gal 4:6; cf. Rom 8:15.

⁴⁶ Cf. Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; Rom 8:11.

⁴⁷ Cf. Jn 16:6.

⁴⁸ Cf. Jn 16:20.

⁴⁹ Cf. Jn 16:7.

In this way there is definitively brought about that new beginning of the self-communication of the Triune God in the Holy Spirit through the work of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of man and of the world.

4. *The Messiah, Anointed with the Holy Spirit*

15. There is also accomplished in its entirety the mission of the Messiah, that is to say of the One who has received the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the Chosen People of God and for the whole of humanity. "Messiah" literally means "Christ," that is, "Anointed One," and in the history of salvation it means "the one anointed with the Holy Spirit." This was the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. Following this tradition, Simon Peter will say in the house of Cornelius: "You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judea...after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power."⁵⁰

From these words of Peter and from many similar ones,⁵¹ one must first go back to the prophecy of Isaiah, sometimes called "the Fifth Gospel" or "the Gospel of the Old Testament." Alluding to the coming of a mysterious personage, which the New Testament revelation will identify with Jesus, Isaiah connects his person and mission with a particular action of the Spirit of God -- the Spirit of the Lord. These are the words of the Prophet: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be the fear of the Lord."⁵²

This text is important for the whole pneumatology of the Old Testament, because it constitutes a kind of bridge between the ancient biblical concept of "spirit," understood primarily as a "charismatic breath of wind," and the "Spirit" as a person and as a gift, a gift for the person. The Messiah of the lineage of David ("from the stump of Jesse") is precisely that person upon whom the Spirit of the Lord "shall rest." It is obvious that in this case one cannot yet speak of a revelation of the Paraclete. However, with this veiled reference to the figure of the

⁵⁰ Acts 10:37f.

⁵¹ Cf Lk 4:16-21; 3:16; 4:14; Mk 1:10.

⁵² 11:1-3.

future Messiah there begins, so to speak, the path towards the full revelation of the Holy Spirit in the unity of the Trinitarian mystery, a mystery which will finally be manifested in the New Covenant.

16. It is precisely the Messiah himself who is this path. In the Old Covenant, anointing had become the external symbol of the gift of the Spirit. The Messiah (more than any other anointed personage in the Old Covenant) is that single great personage anointed by God himself. He is the Anointed One in the sense that he possesses the fullness of the Spirit of God. He himself will also be the mediator in granting this Spirit to the whole People. Here in fact are other words of the Prophet: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."⁵³

The Anointed One is also sent "with the Spirit of the Lord ": "Now the Lord God has sent me and his Spirit."⁵⁴

According to the Book of Isaiah, the Anointed One and the One sent together with the Spirit of the Lord is also the chosen Servant of the Lord upon whom the Spirit of God comes down: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him."⁵⁵

We know that the Servant of the Lord is revealed in the Book of Isaiah as the true Man of Sorrows: the Messiah who suffers for the sins of the world.⁵⁶ And at the same time it is precisely he whose mission will bear for all humanity the true fruits of salvation:

"He will bring forth justice to the nations...";⁵⁷ and he will become "a covenant to the people, a light to the nations...";⁵⁸ "that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."⁵⁹

For: "My spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of

⁵³ 61:1f.

⁵⁴ 48:16.

⁵⁵ Is 42:1.

⁵⁶ Cf. Is 53:5-6, 8.

⁵⁷ Is 42:1.

⁵⁸ Is 42:6.

⁵⁹ Is 49:6.

your children's children, says the Lord, from this time forth and for evermore."⁶⁰

The prophetic texts quoted here are to be read in the light of the Gospel -- just as, in its turn, the New Testament draws a particular clarification from the marvellous light contained in these Old Testament texts. The Prophet presents the Messiah as the one who comes in the Holy Spirit, the one who possesses the fullness of this Spirit in himself and at the same time for others, for Israel, for all the nations, for all humanity. The fullness of the Spirit of God is accompanied by many different gifts, the treasures of salvation, destined in a particular way for the poor and suffering, for all those who open their hearts to these gifts -- sometimes through the painful experience of their own existence -- but first of all through that interior availability which comes from faith. The aged Simeon, the "righteous and devout man" upon whom "rested the Holy Spirit," sensed this at the moment of Jesus' presentation in the Temple, when he perceived in him the "salvation...prepared in the presence of all peoples" at the price of the great suffering -- the Cross -- which he would have to embrace together with his Mother.⁶¹ The Virgin Mary, who "had conceived by the Holy Spirit,"⁶² sensed this even more clearly, when she pondered in her heart the "mysteries" of the Messiah, with whom she was associated.⁶³

17. Here it must be emphasised that clearly the "spirit of the Lord" who rests upon the future Messiah is above all a gift of God for the person of that Servant of the Lord. But the latter is not an isolated and independent person, because he acts in accordance with the will of the Lord, by virtue of the Lord's decision or choice. Even though in the light of the texts of Isaiah the salvific work of the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, includes the action of the Spirit which is carried out through himself, nevertheless in the Old Testament context there is no suggestion of a distinction of subjects, or of the Divine Persons as they subsist in the mystery of the Trinity, and as they are later revealed in the New Testament. Both in Isaiah and in the whole of the Old Testament the personality of the Holy Spirit is completely hidden: in the revelation of the one God, as also in the foretelling of the future Messiah.

⁶⁰ Is 59:21.

⁶¹ Cf. Lk 2:25-35.

⁶² Cf. Lk 1:35.

⁶³ Cf. Lk 2:19, 51.

18. Jesus Christ will make reference to this prediction contained in the words of Isaiah at the beginning of his messianic activity. This will happen in the same Nazareth where he had lived for thirty years in the house of Joseph the carpenter, with Mary, his Virgin Mother. When he had occasion to speak in the Synagogue, he opened the Book of Isaiah and found the passage where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me"; and having read this passage he said to those present: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."⁶⁴ In this way he confessed and proclaimed that he was the Messiah, the one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells as the gift of God himself, the one who possesses the fullness of this Spirit, the one who marks the "new beginning" of the gift which God makes to humanity in the Spirit.

5. Jesus of Nazareth, "Exalted" in the Holy Spirit

19. Even though in his hometown of Nazareth Jesus is not accepted as the Messiah, nonetheless, at the beginning of his public activity, his messianic mission in the Holy Spirit is revealed to the people by John the Baptist. The latter, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, foretells at the Jordan the coming of the Messiah and administers the baptism of repentance. He says: "I baptize you with water; he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."⁶⁵ John the Baptist foretells the Messiah-Christ not only as the one who "is coming" in the Holy Spirit but also as the one who "brings" the Holy Spirit, as Jesus will reveal more clearly in the Upper Room. Here John faithfully echoes the words of Isaiah, words which in the ancient Prophet concerned the future, while in John's teaching on the banks of the Jordan they are the immediate introduction to the new messianic reality. John is not only a prophet but also a messenger: he is the precursor of Christ. What he foretells is accomplished before the eyes of all. Jesus of Nazareth too comes to the Jordan to receive the baptism of repentance. At the sight of him arriving, John proclaims: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."⁶⁶ He says this through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,⁶⁷ bearing witness to the

⁶⁴ Cf. Lk 4:16-21; Is 61:1f.

⁶⁵ Lk 3:16; cf. Mt 3:11; Mk 1:7f.; Jn 1:33.

⁶⁶ Jn 1:29.

⁶⁷ Cf. Jn 1:33f.

fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. At the same time he confesses his faith in the redeeming mission of Jesus of Nazareth. On the lips of John the Baptist, "Lamb of God" is an expression of truth about the Redeemer no less significant than the one used by Isaiah: "Servant of the Lord."

Thus, by the testimony of John at the Jordan, Jesus of Nazareth, rejected by his own fellow-citizens, is exalted before the eyes of Israel as the Messiah, that is to say the "One Anointed" with the Holy Spirit. And this testimony is corroborated by another testimony of a higher order, mentioned by the three Synoptics. For when all the people were baptized and as Jesus, having received baptism, was praying, "the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove"⁶⁸ and at the same time "a voice from heaven said 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.'"⁶⁹

This is a Trinitarian theophany which bears witness to the exaltation of Christ on the occasion of his baptism in the Jordan. It not only confirms the testimony of John the Baptist but also reveals another more profound dimension of the truth about Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah. It is this: the Messiah is the beloved Son of the Father. His solemn exaltation cannot be reduced to the messianic mission of the "Servant of the Lord." In the light of the theophany at the Jordan, this exaltation touches the mystery of the very person of the Messiah. He has been raised up because he is the beloved Son in whom God is well pleased. The voice from on high says: "my Son."

20. The theophany at the Jordan clarifies only in a fleeting way the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, whose entire activity will be carried out in the active presence of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰ This mystery would be gradually revealed and confirmed by Jesus himself by means of everything that he "did and taught."⁷¹ In the course of this teaching and of the messianic signs which Jesus performed before he came to the farewell discourse in the Upper Room, we find events and words which constitute particularly important stages of this progressive revelation. Thus the evangelist Luke, who has already presented Jesus as "full of the Holy Spirit" and "led by the Spirit...in the wilderness,"⁷² tells us that, after the return of the seventy-two disciples from the mission

⁶⁸ Lk 3:21f.; cf. Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10.

⁶⁹ Mt 3:17.

⁷⁰ Cf. St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, XVI, 39: PG 32, 139.

⁷¹ Acts 1:1.

⁷² Cf. Lk 4:1.

entrusted to them by the Master,⁷³ while they were joyfully recounting the fruits of their labours, "in that same hour [Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said: 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was your gracious will.'"⁷⁴ Jesus rejoices at the fatherhood of God: he rejoices because it has been given to him to reveal this fatherhood; he rejoices, finally, as at a particular outpouring of this divine fatherhood on the "little ones." And the evangelist describes all this as "rejoicing in the Holy Spirit."

This "rejoicing" in a certain sense prompts Jesus to say still more. We hear: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."⁷⁵

21. That which during the theophany at the Jordan came so to speak "from outside," from on high, here comes "from within," that is to say from the depths of who Jesus is. It is another revelation of the Father and the Son, united in the Holy Spirit. Jesus speaks only of the fatherhood of God and of his own sonship -- he does not speak directly of the Spirit, who is Love and thereby the union of the Father and the Son. Nonetheless what he says of the Father and of himself -- the Son -- flows from that fullness of the Spirit which is in him, which fills his heart, pervades his own "I," inspires and enlivens his action from the depths. Hence that "rejoicing in the Holy Spirit." The union of Christ with the Holy Spirit, a union of which he is perfectly aware, is expressed in that "rejoicing," which in a certain way renders "perceptible" its hidden source. Thus there is a particular manifestation and rejoicing which is proper to the Son of Man, the Christ-Messiah, whose humanity belongs to the person of the Son of God, substantially one with the Holy Spirit in divinity.

In the magnificent confession of the fatherhood of God, Jesus of Nazareth also manifests himself, his divine "I" -- for he is the Son "of the same substance," and therefore "no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son," that Son who "for us and for our salvation" became man by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of a virgin whose name was Mary.

⁷³ Cf. Lk 10:17-20.

⁷⁴ Lk 10:21; cf. Mt 11:25f.

⁷⁵ Lk 10:22; cf. Mt 11:27.

6. The Risen Christ Says: "Receive the Holy Spirit"

22. It is thanks to Luke's narrative that we are brought closest to the truth contained in the discourse in the Upper Room. Jesus of Nazareth, "raised up" in the Holy Spirit, during this discourse and conversation presents himself as the one who brings the Spirit, as the one who is to bring him and "give" him to the Apostles and to the Church at the price of his own "departure" through the Cross.

The verb "bring" is here used to mean first of all "reveal." In the Old Testament, from the Book of Genesis onwards, the Spirit of God was in some way made known, in the first place as a "breath" of God which gives life, as a supernatural "living breath." In the Book of Isaiah, he is presented as a "gift" for the person of the Messiah, as the one who comes down and rests upon him, in order to guide from within all the salvific activity of the "Anointed One." At the Jordan, Isaiah's proclamation is given a concrete form: Jesus of Nazareth is the one who comes in the Holy Spirit and who brings the Spirit as the gift proper to his own Person, in order to distribute that gift by means of this humanity: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."⁷⁶ In the Gospel of Luke, this revelation of the Holy Spirit is confirmed and added to, as the intimate source of the life and messianic activity of Jesus Christ. In the light of what Jesus says in the farewell discourse in the Upper Room, the Holy Spirit is revealed in a new and fuller way. He is not only the gift to the person (the person of the Messiah), but is a Person-gift. Jesus foretells his coming as that of "another Counsellor" who, being the Spirit of truth, will lead the Apostles and the Church "into all the truth."⁷⁷ This will be accomplished by reason of the particular communion between the Holy Spirit and Christ: "He will take what is mine and declare it to you."⁷⁸ This communion has its original source in the Father: "All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."⁷⁹ Coming from the Father the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father.⁸⁰ The Holy Spirit is first sent as a gift for the Son who was made man, in order to fulfil the messianic prophecies. After the "departure" of Christ the Son, the Johannine text says that the Holy Spirit "will come" directly (it is his

⁷⁶ Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16.

⁷⁷ Jn 16:13.

⁷⁸ Jn 16:14.

⁷⁹ Jn 16:15.

⁸⁰ Cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26.

new mission), to complete the work of the Son. Thus it will be he who brings to fulfilment the new era of the history of salvation.

23. We find ourselves on the threshold of the Paschal events. The new, definitive revelation of the Holy Spirit as a Person who is the gift is accomplished at this precise moment. The Paschal events -- the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ -- are also the time of the new coming of the Holy Spirit, as the Paraclete and the Spirit of truth. They are the time of the "new beginning" of the self-communication of the Triune God to humanity in the Holy Spirit through the work of Christ the Redeemer. This new beginning is the Redemption of the world: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."⁸¹ Already the "giving" of the Son, the gift of the Son, expresses the most profound essence of God who, as Love, is the inexhaustible source of the giving of gifts. The gift made by the Son completes the revelation and giving of the eternal love: the Holy Spirit, who in the inscrutable depths of the divinity is a Person-Gift, through the work of the Son, that is to say by means of the Paschal Mystery, is given to the Apostles and to the Church in a new way, and through them is given to humanity and the whole world.
24. The definitive expression of this mystery is had on the day of the Resurrection. On this day Jesus of Nazareth "descended from David according to the flesh," as the Apostle Paul writes, is "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead."⁸² It can be said therefore that the messianic "raising up" of Christ in the Holy Spirit reaches its zenith in the Resurrection, in which he reveals himself also as the Son of God, "full of power." And this power, the sources of which gush forth in the inscrutable Trinitarian communion, is manifested, first of all, in the fact that the Risen Christ does two things: on the one hand he fulfils God's promise already expressed through the Prophet's words: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you,...my spirit";⁸³ and on the other hand he fulfils his own promise made to the Apostles with the words: "If I go, I will send him to you."⁸⁴ It is he: the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete sent by the Risen Christ to transform us into his own risen image.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Jn 3:16.

⁸² Rom 1:3f.

⁸³ Ez 36:26f.; cf. Jn 7:37-39; 19:34.

⁸⁴ Jn 16:7.

⁸⁵ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Ioannis Evangelium*, Bk. V, Ch. II: PG 73, 755.

"On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"⁸⁶

All the details of this key-text of John's Gospel have their own eloquence, especially if we read them in reference to the words spoken in the same Upper Room at the beginning of the Paschal event. And now these events -- the Triduum Sacrum of Jesus whom the Father consecrated with the anointing and sent into the world -- reach their fulfilment. Christ, who "gave up his spirit" on the Cross⁸⁷ as the Son of Man and the Lamb of God, once risen goes to the Apostles 'to breathe on them' with that power spoken of in the Letter to the Romans.⁸⁸ The Lord's coming fills those present with joy: "Your sorrow will turn into joy,"⁸⁹ as he had already promised them before his Passion. And above all there is fulfilled the principal prediction of the farewell discourse: the Risen Christ, as it were beginning a new creation, "brings" to the Apostles the Holy Spirit. He brings him at the price of his own "departure": he gives them this Spirit as it were through the wounds of his crucifixion: "He showed them his hands and his side." It is in the power of this crucifixion that he says to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Thus there is established a close link between the sending of the Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit. There is no sending of the Holy Spirit (after original sin) without the Cross and the Resurrection: "If I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you."⁹⁰ There is also established a close link between the mission of the Holy Spirit and that of the Son in the Redemption. The mission of the Son, in a certain sense, finds its "fulfilment" in the Redemption. The mission of the Holy Spirit "draws from" the Redemption: "He will take what is mine and declare it to you."⁹¹ The Redemption is totally carried out by the Son as the Anointed One, who came and acted in the power of the Holy Spirit, offering himself finally in sacrifice on the wood of the Cross. And this

⁸⁶ Jn 20:19-22.

⁸⁷ Cf. Jn 19:30.

⁸⁸ Cf. Rom 1:4.

⁸⁹ Cf. Jn 16:20.

⁹⁰ Jn 16:7.

⁹¹ Jn 16:15.

Redemption is, at the same time, constantly carried out in human hearts and minds -- in the history of the world -- by the Holy Spirit, who is the "other Counsellor. "

7. The Holy Spirit and the Era of the Church

25. "Having accomplished the work that the Father had entrusted to the Son on earth (cf. Jn 17:4), on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent to sanctify the Church forever, so that believers might have access to the Father through Christ in one Spirit (cf. Eph 2:18). He is the Spirit of life, the fountain of water springing up to eternal life (cf. Jn 4:14; 7:38ff.), the One through whom the Father restores life to those who are dead through sin, until one day he will raise in Christ their mortal bodies" (cf. Rom 8:10f.).⁹²

In this way the Second Vatican Council speaks of the Church's birth on the day of Pentecost. This event constitutes the definitive manifestation of what had already been accomplished in the same Upper Room on Easter Sunday. The Risen Christ came and "brought" to the Apostles the Holy Spirit. He gave him to them, saying "Receive the Holy Spirit." What had then taken place inside the Upper Room, "the doors being shut," later, on the day of Pentecost is manifested also outside, in public. The doors of the Upper Room are opened and the Apostles go to the inhabitants and the pilgrims who had gathered in Jerusalem on the occasion of the feast, in order to bear witness to Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way the prediction is fulfilled: "He will bear witness to me: and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning."⁹³

We read in another document of the Second Vatican Council: "Doubtless, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified. Yet on the day of Pentecost, he came down upon the disciples to remain with them for ever. On that day the Church was publicly revealed to the multitude, and the Gospel began to spread among the nations by means of preaching."⁹⁴

⁹² Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n.4.

⁹³ Jn 15:26f.

⁹⁴ n. 4.

Dominum et vivificantem

Pope John Paul II

The era of the Church began with the "coming," that is to say with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, together with Mary, the Lord's Mother.⁹⁵ The time of the Church began at the moment when the promises and predictions that so explicitly referred to the Counsellor, the Spirit of truth, began to be fulfilled in complete power and clarity upon the Apostles, thus determining the birth of the Church. The Acts of the Apostles speak of this at length and in many passages, which state that in the mind of the first community, whose convictions Luke expresses, the Holy Spirit assumed the invisible -- but in a certain way "perceptible" -- guidance of those who after the departure of the Lord Jesus felt profoundly that they had been left orphans. With the coming of the Spirit they felt capable of fulfilling the mission entrusted to them. They felt full of strength. It is precisely this that the Holy Spirit worked in them and this is continually at work in the Church, through their successors. For the grace of the Holy Spirit which the Apostles gave to their collaborators through the imposition of hands continues to be transmitted in Episcopal Ordination. The bishops in turn by the Sacrament of Orders render the sacred ministers sharers in this spiritual gift and, through the Sacrament of Confirmation, ensure that all who are reborn of water and the Holy Spirit are strengthened by this gift. And thus, in a certain way, the grace of Pentecost is perpetuated in the Church.

As the Council writes, "the Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple (cf. 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). In them he prays and bears witness to the fact that they are adopted sons (cf. Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15-16:26). The Spirit guides the Church into the fullness of truth (cf. Jn 16:13) and gives her a unity of fellowship and service. He furnishes and directs her with various gifts, both hierarchical and charismatic, and adorns her with the fruits of his grace (cf. Eph 4:11-12; 1 Cor 12:4; Gal 5:22). By the power of the Gospel he makes the Church grow, perpetually renews her and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse."⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Cf. Acts 1:14.

⁹⁶ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 4. There is a whole Patristic and theological tradition concerning the intimate union between the Holy Spirit and the Church, a union presented sometimes as analogous to the relation between the soul and the body in man: cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 24, 1: SC 211, pp. 470-474; St. Augustine, *Sermo 267*, 4, 4: PL 38, 1231; *Sermo 268*, 2: PL 38, 1232; *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, XXV, 13; XXVII, 6: CCL 36, 266, 272f.; St. Gregory the Great, *In Septem Psalmos Poenitentiales Expositio*, Psal. V, 1: PL 79, 602; Didymus the Blind, *De Trinitate*, II, 1: PG 39, 449f.; St. Athanasius, *Oratio 111 Contra Arianos*, 22, 23, 24: PG 26, 368f., 372f.; St. John Chrysostom, *In Epistolam ad Ephesios*, Homily IX, 3: PG 62, 72f. St. Thomas Aquinas has synthesised the

26. These passages quoted from the Conciliar Constitution *Lumen Gentium* tell us that the era of the Church began with the coming of the Holy Spirit. They also tell us that this era, the era of the Church, continues. It continues down the centuries and generations. In our own century, when humanity is already close to the end of the second Millennium after Christ, this era of the Church expressed itself in a special way through the Second Vatican Council, as the Council of our century. For we know that it was in a special way an "ecclesiological" Council: a Council on the theme of the Church. At the same time, the teaching of this Council is essentially "pneumatological": it is permeated by the truth about the Holy Spirit, as the soul of the Church. We can say that in its rich variety of teaching the Second Vatican Council contains precisely all that "the Spirit says to the Churches"⁹⁷ with regard to the present phase of the history of salvation.

Following the guidance of the Spirit of truth and bearing witness together with him, the Council has given a special confirmation of the presence of the Holy Spirit -- the Counsellor. In a certain sense, the Council has made the Spirit newly "present" in our difficult age. In the light of this conviction one grasps more clearly the great importance of all the initiatives aimed at implementing the Second Vatican Council, its teaching and its pastoral and ecumenical thrust. In this sense also the subsequent Assemblies of the Synod of Bishops are to be carefully studied and evaluated, aiming as they do to ensure that the fruits of truth and love -- the authentic fruits of the Holy Spirit -- become a lasting treasure for the People of God in its earthly pilgrimage down the centuries. This work being done by the Church for the testing and bringing together of the salvific fruits of the Spirit bestowed in the Council is something indispensable. For this purpose one must learn how to "discern" them carefully from everything that may instead come originally from the "prince of this world."⁹⁸ This discernment in implementing the Council's work is especially necessary in view of the fact that the Council opened itself widely to the contemporary world, as is clearly seen from the important Conciliar Constitutions *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*.

We read in the Pastoral Constitution: "For theirs (ie., of the disciples of Christ) is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led

preceding Patristic and theological tradition, presenting the Holy Spirit as the "heart" and the "soul" of the Church; cf. *Summa Theo.*, III, q. 8, a. 1, ad 3; *In Symbolum Apostolorum Expositio*, a. IX; *In Tertium Librum Sententiarum*, Dist. XIII, q. 2, a. 2, *Quaestiuncula* 3. Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad Gentes*

⁹⁷ Cf. Rev 2:29; 3:6, 13, 22.

⁹⁸ Cf. Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.

by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history."⁹⁹ "The Church truly knows that only God, whom she serves, meets the deepest longings of the human heart, which is never fully satisfied by what the world has to offer."¹⁰⁰ "God 's Spirit. . . with a marvellous providence directs the unfolding of time and renews the face of the earth."¹⁰¹

PART II: THE SPIRIT WHO CONVINCES THE WORLD CONCERNING SIN

1. Sin, Righteousness and Judgment

27. When Jesus during the discourse in the Upper Room foretells the coming of the Holy Spirit "at the price of" his own departure, and promises "I will send him to you," in the very same context he adds: "And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."¹⁰² The same Counsellor and Spirit of truth who has been promised as the one who "will teach" and "bring to remembrance, " who "will bear witness," and "guide into all the truth," in the words just quoted is foretold as the one who "will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement."

⁹⁹ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 41.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, n. 26.

¹⁰² Jn 16:7f.

The context too seems significant. Jesus links this foretelling of the Holy Spirit to the words indicating his "departure" through the Cross, and indeed emphasises the need for this departure: "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you."¹⁰³

But what counts more is the explanation that Jesus himself adds to these three words: sin, righteousness, judgment. For he says this: "He Will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; concerning judgment, because the ruler of the world is judged."¹⁰⁴ In the mind of Jesus, sin, righteousness and judgment have a very precise meaning, different from the meaning that one might be inclined to attribute to these words independently of the speaker's explanation. This explanation also indicates how one is to understand the "convincing the world" which is proper to the action of the Holy Spirit. Both the meaning of the individual words and the fact that Jesus linked them together in the same phrase are important here.

"Sin," in this passage, means the incredulity that Jesus encountered among "his own," beginning with the people of his own town of Nazareth. Sin means the rejection of his mission, a rejection that will cause people to condemn him to death. When he speaks next of "righteousness," Jesus seems to have in mind that definitive justice, which the Father will restore to him when he grants him the glory of the Resurrection and Ascension into heaven: "I go to the Father." In its turn, and in the context of "sin" and "righteousness" thus understood, "judgment" means that the Spirit of truth will show the guilt of the "world" in condemning Jesus to death on the Cross. Nevertheless, Christ did not come into the world only to judge it and condemn it: he came to save it.¹⁰⁵ Convincing about sin and righteousness has as its purpose the salvation of the world, the salvation of men. Precisely this truth seems to be emphasised by the assertion that "judgment" concerns only the prince of this world," Satan, the one who from the beginning has been exploiting the work of creation against salvation, against the covenant and the union of man with God: he is "already judged" from the start. If the Spirit-Counsellor is to convince the world precisely concerning judgment, it is in order to continue in the world the salvific work of Christ.

¹⁰³ Jn 16:7.

¹⁰⁴ Jn 16:8-11.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Jn 3:17; 12:47.

28. Here we wish to concentrate our attention principally on this mission of the Holy Spirit, which is "to convince the world concerning sin," but at the same time respecting the general context of Jesus' words in the Upper Room. The Holy Spirit, who takes from the Son the work of the Redemption of the world, by this very fact takes the task of the salvific "convincing of sin." This convincing is in permanent reference to "righteousness": that is to say to definitive salvation in God, to the fulfilment of the economy that has as its centre the crucified and glorified Christ. And this salvific economy of God in a certain sense removes man from "judgment," that is from the damnation which has been inflicted on the Sill or Satan, "the prince of this world," the one who because of his sin has become "the ruler of this world of darkness."¹⁰⁶ And here we see that, through this reference to "judgment," vast horizons open up for understanding "sin" and also "righteousness." The Holy Spirit, by showing sin against the background of Christ's Cross in the economy of salvation (one could say "sin saved"), enables us to understand how his mission is also "to convince" of the sin that has already been definitively judged ("sin condemned").
29. All the words uttered by the Redeemer in the Upper Room on the eve of his Passion become part of the era of the Church: first of all, the words about the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete and Spirit of truth. The words become part of it in an ever new way, in every generation, in every age. This is confirmed, as far as our own age is concerned, by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council as a whole, and especially in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Many passages of this document indicate clearly that the Council, by opening itself to the light of the Spirit of truth, is seen to be the authentic depositary of the predictions and promises made by Christ to the Apostles and to the Church in the farewell discourse: in a particular way as the depositary of the predictions that the Holy Spirit would "convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

This is already indicated by the text in which the Council explains how it understands the "world": "The Council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which that family lives. It gazes upon the world which is the theatre of man's history, and carries the marks of his energies, his tragedies, and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ. He was crucified and rose again to break the stranglehold of personified Evil, so that this world might be fashioned anew according to God's design

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Eph 6:12.

and reach its fulfilment."¹⁰⁷ This very rich text needs to be read in conjunction with the other passages in the Constitution that seek to show with all the realism of faith the situation of sin in the contemporary world and that also seek to explain its essence, beginning from different points of view.¹⁰⁸

When on the eve of the Passover Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as the one who "will convince the world concerning sin," on the one hand this statement must be given the widest possible meaning, insofar as it includes all the sin in the history of humanity. But on the other hand, when Jesus explains that this sin consists in the fact that "they do not believe in him," this meaning seems to apply only to those who rejected the messianic mission of the Son of Man and condemned him to death on the Cross. But one can hardly fail to notice that this more "limited" and historically specified meaning of sin expands, until it assumes a universal dimension by reason of the universality of the Redemption, accomplished through the Cross. The revelation of the mystery of the Redemption opens the way to an understanding in which every sin wherever and whenever committed has a reference to the Cross of Christ -- and therefore indirectly also to the sin of those who "have not believed in him," and who condemned Jesus Christ to death on the Cross.

From this point of view we must return to the event of Pentecost.

2. The Testimony of the Day of Pentecost

30. Christ's prophecies in the farewell discourse found their most exact and direct confirmation on the day of Pentecost, in particular the prediction which we are dealing with: "The Counsellor...will convince the world concerning sin." On that day, the promised Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles gathered in prayer together with Mary the Mother of Jesus, in the same Upper Room, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance,"¹⁰⁹ "thus

¹⁰⁷ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, nn. 10, 13, 27, 37, 63, 73, 79, 80.

¹⁰⁹ Acts 2:4.

bringing back to unity the scattered races and offering to the Father the first-fruits of all the nations."¹¹⁰

The connection between Christ's prediction and this event is clear. We perceive here the first and fundamental fulfilment of the promise of the Paraclete. He comes, sent by the Father, "after" the departure of Christ, "at the price of" that departure. This is first a departure through the Cross, and later, forty days after the Resurrection, through his Ascension into heaven. Once more, at the moment of the Ascension, Jesus orders the Apostles "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father"; "but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit"; "but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."¹¹¹

These last words contain an echo or reminder of the prediction made in the Upper Room. And on the day of Pentecost this prediction is fulfilled with total accuracy. Acting under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who had been received by the Apostles while they were praying in the Upper Room, Peter comes forward and speaks before a multitude of people of different languages, gathered for the feast. He proclaims what he certainly would not have had the courage to say before: Men of Israel,...Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."¹¹²

Jesus had foretold and promised: "He will bear witness to me,...and you also are my witnesses." In the first discourse of Peter in Jerusalem this "witness" finds its clear beginning: it is the witness to Christ crucified and risen. The witness of the Spirit-Paraclete and of the Apostles. And in the very content of that first witness, the Spirit of truth, through the lips of Peter, "convinces the world concerning sin": first of all, concerning the sin which is the rejection of Christ even to his condemnation to death, to death on the Cross on Golgotha. Similar proclamations will be repeated, according to the text of the Acts of the Apostles, on other occasions and in various places.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 17, 2: SC 211, pp. 330-332.

¹¹¹ Acts 1:4, S, 8.

¹¹² Acts 2:22-24.

¹¹³ Cf. Acts 3:14f.; 4:10, 27f.; 7:52; 10:39; 13:28f.; etc.

31. Beginning from this initial witness at Pentecost and for all future time the action of the Spirit of truth who "convinces the world concerning the sin" of the rejection of Christ is linked inseparably with the witness to be borne to the Paschal Mystery: the mystery of the Crucified and Risen One. And in this link the same "convincing concerning sin" reveals its own salvific dimension. For it is a "convincing" that has as its purpose not merely the accusation of the world and still less its condemnation. Jesus Christ did not come into the world to judge it and condemn it but to save it.¹¹⁴ This is emphasised in this first discourse, when Peter exclaims: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."¹¹⁵ And then, when those present ask Peter and the Apostles: "Brethren, what shall we do?" this is Peter's answer: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."¹¹⁶

In this way "convincing concerning sin" becomes at the same time a convincing concerning the remission of sins, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter in his discourse in Jerusalem calls people to conversion, as Jesus called his listeners to conversion at the beginning of his messianic activity.¹¹⁷ Conversion requires convincing of sin; it includes the interior judgment of the conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in man's inmost being, becomes at the same time a new beginning of the bestowal of grace and love: "Receive the Holy Spirit."¹¹⁸ Thus in this "convincing concerning sin" we discover a double gift: the gift of the truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Counsellor.

The convincing concerning sin, through the ministry of the apostolic *kerygma* in the early Church, is referred -- under the impulse of the Spirit poured out at Pentecost -- to the redemptive power of Christ crucified and risen. Thus the promise concerning the Holy Spirit made before Easter is fulfilled: "He will take what is mine and declare it to you." When therefore, during the Pentecost event, Peter speaks of the sin of those who "have not believed"¹¹⁹ and have sent Jesus of Nazareth to an ignominious death, he bears witness to victory over sin: a victory achieved, in a certain sense, through the greatest sin that man could

¹¹⁴ Cf. Jn 3:17; 12:47.

¹¹⁵ Acts 2:36.

¹¹⁶ Acts 2:37f.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Mk 1:15.

¹¹⁸ Jn 20:22.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Jn 16:9.

commit: the killing of Jesus, the Son of God, consubstantial with the Father! Similarly, the death of the Son of God conquers human death: "I will be your death, O death,"¹²⁰ as the sin of having crucified the Son of God "conquers" human sin! That sin which was committed in Jerusalem on Good Friday -- and also every human sin. For the greatest sin on man's part is matched, in the heart of the Redeemer, by the oblation of supreme love that conquers the evil of all the sins of man. On the basis of this certainty the Church in the Roman liturgy does not hesitate to repeat every year, at the Easter Vigil, "O happy fault!" in the deacon's proclamation of the Resurrection when he sings the "Exsultet. "

32. However, no one but he himself, the Spirit of truth, can "convince the world," man or the human conscience of this ineffable truth. He is the Spirit who "searches even the depths of God."¹²¹ Faced with the mystery of sin, we have to search "the depths of God" to their very depth. It is not enough to search the human conscience, the intimate mystery of man, but we have to penetrate the inner mystery of God, those "depths of God" that are summarized thus: to the Father -- in the Son -- through the Holy Spirit. It is precisely the Holy Spirit who "searches" the "depths of God," and from them draws God's response to man's sin. With this response there closes the process of "convincing concerning sin," as the event of Pentecost shows.

By convincing the "world" concerning the sin of Golgotha, concerning the death of the innocent Lamb, as happens on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit also convinces of every sin, committed in any place and at any moment in human history: for he demonstrates its relationship with the Cross of Christ. The "convincing" is the demonstration of the evil of sin, of every sin, in relation to the Cross of Christ. Sin, shown in this relationship, is recognized in the entire dimension of evil proper to it, through the "*mysterium iniquitatis*"¹²² which is hidden within it. Man does not know this dimension -- he is absolutely ignorant of it apart from the Cross of Christ. So he cannot be "convinced" of it except by the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of truth but who is also the Counsellor.

For sin, shown in relation to the cross of Christ, is at the same time identified in the full dimension of the "*mysterium pietatis*,"¹²³ as indicated by the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et*

¹²⁰ Hos 14:14 Vulgate; cf. 1 Cor 15:55.

¹²¹ Cf. 1 Cor 2:10.

¹²² Cf. 2 Thess 2:7.

¹²³ Cf. 1 Tim 3:16.

Paenitentia.¹²⁴ Man is also absolutely ignorant of this dimension of sin apart from the Cross Christ. And he cannot be "convinced" of this dimension either, except by the Holy Spirit: the one who "searches the depths of God."

3. The Witness Concerning the Beginning: the Original Reality of Sin

33. This is the dimension of sin that we find in the witness concerning the beginning, commented on in the Book of Genesis.¹²⁵ It is the sin that according to the revealed Word of God constitutes the principle and root of all the others. We find ourselves faced with the original reality of sin in human history and at the same time in the whole of the economy of salvation. It can be said that in this sin the "*mysterium iniquitatis*" has its beginning, but it can also be said that this is the sin concerning which the redemptive power of the "*mysterium pietatis*" becomes particularly clear and efficacious. This is expressed by St. Paul, when he contrasts the "disobedience" of the first Adam with the "obedience" of Christ, the second Adam: "Obedience unto death."¹²⁶

According to the witness concerning the beginning, sin in its original reality takes place in man's will -- and conscience -- first of all as "disobedience," that is, as opposition of the will of man to the will of God. This original disobedience presupposes a rejection, or at least a turning away from the truth contained in the Word of God, who creates the world. This Word is the same Word who was "in the beginning with God," who "was God," and without whom "nothing has been made of all that is," since "the world was made through him."¹²⁷ He is the Word who is also the eternal law, the source of every law which regulates the world and especially human acts. When therefore on the eve of his Passion Jesus Christ speaks of the sin of those who "do not believe in him," in these words of his, full of sorrow, there is as it were a distant echo of that sin which in its original form is obscurely inscribed in the mystery of creation. For the one who is speaking is not only the Son of Man but the one who is also "the first-born of all creation," "for in him

¹²⁴ Cf. *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), 19-22: AAS 77 (1985), pp. 229-233.

¹²⁵ Cf. Gen 1-3.

¹²⁶ Cf. Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8.

¹²⁷ Cf. Jn 1:1, 2, 3, 10.

all things were created ...through him and for him."¹²⁸ In the light of this truth we can understand that the "disobedience" in the mystery of the beginning presupposes in a certain sense the same "non-faith," that same "they have not believed" which will be repeated in the Paschal Mystery. As we have said, it is a matter of a rejection or at least a turning away from the truth contained in the Word of the Father. The rejection expresses itself in practice as "disobedience," in an act committed as an effect of the temptation which comes from the "father of lies."¹²⁹ Therefore, at the root of human sin is the lie which is a radical rejection of the truth contained in the Word of the Father, through whom is expressed the loving omnipotence of the Creator: the omnipotence and also the love "of God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth."

34. "The Spirit of God," who according to the biblical description of creation "was moving over the face of the water,"¹³⁰ signifies the same "Spirit who searches the depths of God": "searches the depths of the Father and of the Word-Son in the mystery of creation. Not only is he the direct witness of their mutual love from which creation derives, but he himself is this love. He himself, as love, is the eternal uncreated gift. In him is the source and the beginning of every giving of gifts to creatures. The witness concerning the beginning, which we find in the whole of Revelation, beginning with the Book of Genesis, is unanimous on this point. To create means to call into existence from nothing: therefore, to create means to give existence. And if the visible world is created for man, therefore the world is given to man.¹³¹ And at the same time that same man in his own humanity receives as a gift a special "image and likeness" to God. This means not only rationality and freedom as constitutive properties of human nature, but also, from the very beginning, the capacity of having a personal relationship with God, as "I" and "you," and therefore the capacity of having a covenant, which will take place in God's salvific communication with man. Against the background of the "image and likeness" of God, "the gift of the Spirit" ultimately means a call to friendship, in which the transcendent "depths of God" become in some way opened to participation on the part of man. The Second Vatican Council teaches; "The invisible God out of the abundance of his love speaks to men as

¹²⁸ Cf. Col 1:15-18.

¹²⁹ Cf. Jn 8:44.

¹³⁰ Cf. Gen 1:2.

¹³¹ Cf. Gen 1:26, 28, 29.

friends and lives among them, so that he may invite and take them into fellowship with himself."¹³²

35. The Spirit, therefore, who "searches everything, even the depths of God," knows from the beginning "the secrets of man."¹³³ For this reason he alone can fully "convince concerning the sin" that happened at the beginning, that sin which is the root of all other sins and the source of man's sinfulness on earth, a source which never ceases to be active. The Spirit of truth knows the original reality of the sin caused in the will of man by the "father of lies," he who already "has been judged."¹³⁴ The Holy Spirit therefore convinces the world of sin in connection with this "judgment," but by constantly guiding toward the "righteousness" that has been revealed to man together with the Cross of Christ: through "obedience unto death."¹³⁵

Only the Holy Spirit can convince concerning the sin of the human beginning, precisely he who is the love of the Father and of the Son, he who is gift, whereas the sin of the human beginning consists in untruthfulness and in the rejection of the gift and the love which determine the beginning of the world and of man.

36. According to the witness concerning the beginning which we find in the Scriptures and in Tradition, after the first (and also more complete) description in the Book of Genesis, sin in its original form is understood as "disobedience," and this means simply and directly transgression of a prohibition laid down by God.¹³⁶ But in the light of the whole context it is also obvious that the ultimate roots of this disobedience are to be sought in the whole real situation of man. Having been called into existence, the human being -- man and woman -- is a creature. The "image of God," consisting in rationality and freedom, expresses the greatness and dignity of the human subject, who is a person. But this personal subject is also always a creature: in his existence and essence he depends on the Creator. According to the Book of Genesis, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" was to express and constantly remind man of the "limit" impassable for a created being. God's prohibition is to be understood in this sense: the Creator forbids man and woman to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The words of the enticement, that is to say the temptation, as formulated in the sacred

¹³² Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, n. 2.

¹³³ Cf. 1 Cor 2:10f.

¹³⁴ Cf. Jn 16:11.

¹³⁵ Cf. Phil 2:8.

¹³⁶ Cf. Gen 2:16f.

text, are an inducement to transgress this prohibition -- that is to say, to go beyond that "limit": "When you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God ["like gods"], knowing good and evil."¹³⁷

"Disobedience" means precisely going beyond that limit, which remains impassable to the will and the freedom of man as a created being. For God the Creator is the one definitive source of the moral order in the world created by him. Man cannot decide by himself what is good and what is evil -- cannot "know good and evil, like God." In the created world God indeed remains the first and sovereign source for deciding about good and evil, through the intimate truth of being, which is the reflection of the Word, the eternal Son, consubstantial with the Father. To man, created to the image of God, the Holy Spirit gives the gift of conscience, so that in this conscience the image may faithfully reflect its model, which is both Wisdom and eternal Law, the source of the moral order in man and in the world. "Disobedience," as the original dimension of sin, means the rejection of this source, through man's claim to become an independent and exclusive source for deciding about good and evil. The Spirit who "searches the depths of God," and who at the same time is for man the light of conscience and the source of the moral order, knows in all its fullness this dimension of the sin inscribed in the mystery of man's beginning. And the Spirit does not cease "convincing the world of it" in connection with the Cross of Christ on Golgotha.

37. According to the witness of the beginning, God in creation has revealed himself as omnipotence, which is love. At the same time he has revealed to man that, as the "image and likeness" of his Creator, he is called to participate in truth and love. This participation means a life in union with God, who is "eternal life."¹³⁸ But man, under the influence of the "father of lies," has separated himself from this participation. To what degree? Certainly not to the degree of the sin of a pure spirit, to the degree of the sin of Satan. The human spirit is incapable of reaching such a degree.¹³⁹ In the very description given in Genesis it is easy to see the difference of degree between the "breath of evil" on the part of the one who "has sinned (or remains in sin) from the beginning"¹⁴⁰ and already "has been judged,"¹⁴¹ and the evil of disobedience on the part of man.

¹³⁷ Gen 3:5.

¹³⁸ Cf. Gen 3:22 concerning the "tree of life"; cf. also Jn 3:36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 10:28; 12:50; 14:6; Acts 13:48; Rom 6:23; Gal 6:8; 1 Tim 1:16; Tit 1:2; 3:7; 1 Pet 3:22; 1 Jn 1:2; 2:25; 5:11, 13; Rev 2:7.

¹³⁹ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theo.*, Ia-IIae, q. 80, a. 4, ad 3.

¹⁴⁰ 1 Jn 3:8.

Man's disobedience, nevertheless, always means a turning away from God, and in a certain sense the closing up of human freedom in his regard. It also means a certain opening of this freedom -- of the human mind and will -- to the one who is the "father of lies." This act of conscious choice is not only "disobedience" but also involves a certain consent to the motivation which was contained in the first temptation to sin and which is unceasingly renewed during the whole history of man on earth: "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Here we find ourselves at the very centre of what could be called the "anti-Word," that is to say the "anti-truth:" For the truth about man becomes falsified: who man is and what are the impassable limits of his being and freedom. This "anti-truth" is possible because at the same time there is a complete falsification of the truth about who God is. God the Creator is placed in a state of suspicion, indeed of accusation, in the mind of the creature. For the first time in human history there appears the perverse "genius of suspicion." He seeks to "falsify" Good itself; the absolute Good, which precisely in the work of creation has manifested itself as the Good which gives in an inexpressible way: as *bonum diffusivum sui*, as creative love. Who can completely "convince concerning sin," or concerning this motivation of man's original disobedience, except the one who alone is the gift and the source of all giving of gifts, except the Spirit, who "searches the depths of God" and is the love of the Father and the Son?

38. For in spite of all the witness of creation and of the salvific economy inherent in it, the spirit of darkness¹⁴² is capable of showing God as an enemy of his own creature, and in the first place as an enemy of man, as a source of danger and threat to man. In this way Satan manages to sow in man's soul the seed of opposition to the one who "from the beginning" would be considered as man's enemy -- and not as Father. Man is challenged to become the adversary of God!

The analysis of sin in its original dimension indicates that, through the influence of the "father of lies," throughout the history of humanity there will be a constant pressure on man to reject God, even to the point of hating him: "Love of self to the point of contempt for God," as St. Augustine puts it.¹⁴³ Man will be inclined to see in God primarily a limitation of himself, and not the source of his own freedom and the fullness of good. We see this confirmed in the modern age, when the

¹⁴¹ Jn 16:11.

¹⁴² Cf. Eph 6:12; Lk 22:53.

¹⁴³ *De Civitate Dei*, XIV, 28: CCL 48, p. 541.

atheistic ideologies seek to root out religion on the grounds that religion causes the radical "alienation" of man, as if man were dispossessed of his own humanity when, accepting the idea of God, he attributes to God what belongs to man, and exclusively to man! Hence a process of thought and historico-sociological practice in which the rejection of God has reached the point of declaring his "death." An absurdity, both in concept and expression! But the ideology of the "death of God" is more a threat to man, as the Second Vatican Council indicates when it analyses the question of the "independence of earthly affairs" and writes: "For without the Creator the creature would disappear...when God is forgotten the creature itself grows unintelligible."¹⁴⁴ The ideology of the "death of God" easily demonstrates in its effects that on the "theoretical and practical" levels it is the ideology of the "death of man."

4. The Spirit Who Transforms Suffering into Salvific Love

39. The Spirit who searches the depths of God was called by Jesus in his discourse in the Upper Room the Paraclete. For from the beginning the Spirit "is invoked"¹⁴⁵ in order to "convince the world concerning sin." He is invoked in a definitive way through the Cross of Christ. Convincing concerning sin means showing the evil that sin contains, and this is equivalent to revealing the mystery of iniquity. It is not possible to grasp the evil of sin in all its sad reality without "searching the depths of God." From the very beginning, the obscure mystery of sin has appeared in the world against the background of a reference to the Creator of human freedom. Sin has appeared as an act of the will of the creature-man contrary to the will of God, to the salvific will of God; indeed, sin has appeared in opposition to the truth, on the basis of the lie which has now been definitively "judged": the lie that has placed in a state of accusation, a state of permanent suspicion, creative and salvific love itself. Man has followed the "father of lies," setting himself up in opposition to the Father of life and the Spirit of truth.

Therefore, will not "convincing concerning sin" also have to mean revealing suffering? Revealing the pain, unimaginable and inexpressible, which on account of sin the Book of Genesis in its

¹⁴⁴ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 36.

¹⁴⁵ In Greek the verb is *parakalem*, which means to invoke, to call to oneself.

anthropomorphic vision seems to glimpse in the "depths of God" and in a certain sense in the very heart of the ineffable Trinity? The Church, taking her inspiration from Revelation, believes and professes that sin is an offence against God. What corresponds, in the inscrutable intimacy of the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, to this "offence," this rejection of the Spirit who is love and gift? The concept of God as the necessarily most perfect being certainly excludes from God any pain deriving from deficiencies or wounds; but in the "depths of God" there is a Father's love that, faced with man's sin, in the language of the Bible reacts so deeply as to say: "I am sorry that I have made him."¹⁴⁶ "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth... And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth... The Lord said: 'I am sorry that I have made them.'"¹⁴⁷ But more often the Sacred Book speaks to us of a Father who feels compassion for man, as though sharing his pain. In a word, this inscrutable and indescribable fatherly "pain" will bring about above all the wonderful economy of redemptive love in Jesus Christ, so that through the *mysterium pietatis* love can reveal itself in the history of man as stronger than sin. So that the "gift" may prevail!

The Holy Spirit, who in the words of Jesus "convinces concerning sin," is the love of the Father and the Son, and as such is the Trinitarian gift, and at the same time the eternal source of every divine giving of gifts to creatures. Precisely in him we can picture as personified and actualized in a transcendent way that mercy which the patristic and theological tradition following the line of the Old and New Testaments, attributes to God. In man, mercy includes sorrow and compassion for the misfortunes of one's neighbour. In God, the Spirit-Love expresses the consideration of human sin in a fresh outpouring of salvific love. From God, in the unity of the Father with the Son, the economy of salvation is born, the economy which fills the history of man with the gifts of the Redemption. Whereas sin, by rejecting love, has caused the "suffering" of man which in some way has affected the whole of creation,¹⁴⁸ the Holy Spirit will enter into human and cosmic suffering with a new outpouring of love, which will redeem the world. And on the lips of Jesus the Redeemer, in whose humanity the "suffering" of God is concretized, there will be heard a word which manifests the eternal love full of mercy: "*Misereor*."¹⁴⁹ Thus, on the part of the Holy Spirit, "convincing of sin" becomes a manifestation before creation, which is "subjected to futility," and above all in the depth of human

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Gen 6:7.

¹⁴⁷ Gen 6:5-7.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Rom 8:20-22.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Mt 15:32; Mk 8:2.

consciences, that sin is conquered through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God who has become even "unto death" the obedient servant who, by making up for man's disobedience, accomplishes the redemption of the world. In this way the spirit of truth, the Paraclete, "convinces concerning sin."

40. The redemptive value of Christ's sacrifice is expressed in very significant words by the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, who after recalling the sacrifices of the Old Covenant in which "the blood of goats and bulls..." purifies in "the flesh," adds: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"¹⁵⁰ Though we are aware of other possible interpretations, our considerations on the presence of the Holy Spirit in the whole of Christ's life lead us to see this text as an invitation to reflect on the presence of the same Spirit also in the redemptive sacrifice of the Incarnate Word.

To begin with we reflect on the first words dealing with this sacrifice, and then separately on the "purification of conscience" which it accomplishes. For it is a sacrifice offered "through the eternal Spirit," that "derives" from it the power to "convince concerning sin." It is the same Holy Spirit, whom, according to the promise made in the Upper Room, Jesus Christ "will bring" to the Apostles on the day of his Resurrection, when he presents himself to them with the wounds of the crucifixion, and whom "he will give" them "for the remission of sins": "Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven."¹⁵¹

We know that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power," as Simon Peter said in the house of the centurion Cornelius.¹⁵² We know of the Paschal Mystery of his "departure," from the Gospel of John. The words of the Letter to the Hebrews now explain to us how Christ "offered himself without blemish to God," and how he did this "with an eternal Spirit." In the sacrifice of the Son of Man the Holy Spirit is present and active just as he acted in Jesus' conception, in his coming into the world, in his hidden life and in his public ministry. According to the Letter to the Hebrews, on the way to his "departure" through Gethsemani and Golgotha, the same Christ Jesus in his own humanity opened himself totally to this action of the Spirit-Paraclete, who from suffering enables eternal salvific love to

¹⁵⁰ Heb 9:13f.

¹⁵¹ Jn 20:22f.

¹⁵² Acts 10:38.

spring forth. Therefore he "was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered."¹⁵³ In this way this Letter shows how humanity, subjected to sin, in the descendants of the first Adam, in Jesus Christ became perfectly subjected to God and united to him, and at the same time full of compassion towards men. Thus there is a new humanity, which in Jesus Christ through the suffering of the Cross has returned to the love which was betrayed by Adam through sin. This new humanity is discovered precisely in the divine source of the original outpouring of gifts: in the Spirit, who "searches...the depths of God" and is himself love and gift.

The Son of God Jesus Christ, as man, in the ardent prayer of his Passion, enabled the Holy Spirit, who had already penetrated the inmost depths of his humanity, to transform that humanity into a perfect sacrifice through the act of his death as the victim of love on the Cross. He made this offering by himself. As the one priest, "he offered himself without blemish to God."¹⁵⁴ In his humanity he was worthy to become this sacrifice, for he alone was "without blemish." But he offered it "through the eternal Spirit," which means that the Holy Spirit acted in a special way in this absolute self-giving of the Son of Man, in order to transform this suffering into redemptive love.

41. The Old Testament on several occasions speaks of "fire from heaven" which burnt the oblations presented by men.¹⁵⁵ By analogy one can say that the Holy Spirit is the "fire from heaven" which works in the depth of the mystery of the Cross. Proceeding from the Father, he directs toward the Father the sacrifice of the Son, bringing it into the divine reality of the Trinitarian communion. If sin caused suffering, now the pain of God in Christ crucified acquires through the Holy Spirit its full human expression. Thus there is a paradoxical mystery of love: in Christ there suffers a God who has been rejected by his own creature: "They do not believe in me!"; but at the same time, from the depth of this suffering -- and indirectly from the depth of the very sin "of not having believed" -- the Spirit draws a new measure of the gift made to man and to creation from the beginning. In the depth of the mystery of the Cross, love is at work, that love which brings man back again to share in the life that is in God himself.

The Holy Spirit as Love and Gift comes down, in a certain sense, into the very heart of the sacrifice which is offered on the Cross. Referring

¹⁵³ Heb 5:7f.

¹⁵⁴ Heb 9:14.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Lev 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38; 2 Chron 7:1.

here to the biblical tradition, we can say: He consumes this sacrifice with the fire of the love which unites the Son with the Father in the Trinitarian communion. And since the sacrifice of the Cross is an act proper to Christ, also in this sacrifice he "receives" the Holy Spirit. He receives the Holy Spirit in such a way that afterwards -- and he alone with God the Father -- can "give him" to the Apostles, to the Church, to humanity. He alone "sends" the Spirit from the Father.¹⁵⁶ He alone presents himself before the Apostles in the Upper Room, "breathes upon them" and says: "Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven,"¹⁵⁷ as John the Baptist had foretold: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."¹⁵⁸ With those words of Jesus, the holy Spirit is revealed and at the same time made present as the Love that works in the depths of the Paschal Mystery, as the source of the salvific power of the Cross of Christ, and as the gift of new and eternal life.

This truth about the Holy Spirit finds daily expression in the Roman liturgy, when before Communion the priest pronounces those significant words; "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit your death brought life to the world..." And in the Third Eucharistic Prayer, referring to the same salvific plan, the priest asks God that the Holy Spirit may "make us an everlasting gift to you."

5. The Blood that Purifies the Conscience

42. We have said that, at the climax of the Paschal Mystery, the Holy Spirit is definitively revealed and made present in a new way. The Risen Christ says to the Apostles: "Receive the Holy Spirit." Thus the Holy Spirit is revealed, for the words of Christ constitute the confirmation of what he had promised and foretold during the discourse in the Upper Room. And with this the Paraclete is also made present in a new way. In fact, he was already at work from the beginning in the mystery of creation and throughout the history of the Old Covenant of God with man. His action was fully confirmed by the sending of the Son of Man as the Messiah, who came in the power of the Holy Spirit. At the climax of Jesus' messianic mission, the Holy Spirit becomes present in the Paschal Mystery in all his divine subjectivity: as the one who is now to

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Jn 15:26.

¹⁵⁷ Jn 20:22f.

¹⁵⁸ Mt 3:11.

continue the salvific work rooted in the sacrifice of the Cross. Of course Jesus entrusts this work to humanity: to the Apostles, to the Church. Nevertheless, in these men and through them the Holy Spirit remains the transcendent principal agent of the accomplishment of this work in the human spirit and in the history of the world: the invisible and at the same time omnipresent Paraclete! The Spirit who "blows where he wills."¹⁵⁹

The words of the Risen Christ on the "first day of the week" give particular emphasis to the presence of the Paraclete-Counsellor as the one who "convinces the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment." For it is only in this relationship that it is possible to explain the words which Jesus directly relates to the "gift" of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. He says: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."¹⁶⁰ Jesus confers on the Apostles the power to forgive sins, so that they may pass it on to their successors in the Church. But this power granted to men presupposes and includes the saving action of the Holy Spirit. By becoming "the light of hearts,"¹⁶¹ that is to say the light of consciences, the Holy Spirit "convinces concerning sin," which is to say, he makes man realize his own evil and at the same time directs him toward what is good. Thanks to the multiplicity of the Spirit's gifts, by reason of which he is invoked as the "sevenfold one," every kind of human sin can be reached by God's saving power. In reality -- as St. Bonaventure says -- "by virtue of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit all evils are destroyed and all good things are produced."¹⁶²

Thus the conversion of the human heart, which is an indispensable condition for the forgiveness of sins, is brought about by the influence of the Counsellor. Without a true conversion, which implies inner contrition, and without a sincere and firm purpose of amendment, sins remain "unforgiven," in the words of Jesus, and with him in the Tradition of the Old and New Covenants. For the first words uttered by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry, according to the Gospel of Mark, are these: "Repent, and believe in the Gospel."¹⁶³ A confirmation of this exhortation is the "convincing concerning sin" that the Holy Spirit undertakes in a new way by virtue of the Redemption accomplished by the Blood of the Son of Man. Hence the Letter to the Hebrews says that

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Jn 3:8.

¹⁶⁰ Jn. 20:22f.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Sequence *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*.

¹⁶² St. Bonaventure, *De Septem Donis Spiritus Sancti*, Collatio II, 3: *Ad Claras Aquas*, V, 463.

¹⁶³ Mk 1:15.

this "blood purifies the conscience."¹⁶⁴ It therefore, so to speak, opens to the Holy Spirit the door into man's inmost being, namely into the sanctuary of human consciences.

43. The Second Vatican Council mentioned the Catholic teaching on conscience when it spoke about man's vocation and in particular about the dignity of the human person. It is precisely the conscience in particular which determines this dignity. For the conscience is "the most secret core and sanctuary of a man, where he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths." It "can ...speak to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that." This capacity to command what is good and to forbid evil, placed in man by the Creator, is the main characteristic of the personal subject. But at the same time, "in the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience."¹⁶⁵ The conscience therefore is not an independent and exclusive capacity to decide what is good and what is evil. Rather there is profoundly imprinted upon it a principle of obedience vis-à-vis the objective norm which establishes and conditions the correspondence of its decisions with the commands and prohibitions which are at the basis of human behaviour, as from the passage of the Book of Genesis which we have already considered.¹⁶⁶ Precisely in this sense the conscience is the "secret sanctuary" in which "God's voice echoes." The conscience is "the voice of God," even when man recognizes in it nothing more than the principle of the moral order which it is not humanly possible to doubt, even without any direct reference to the Creator. It is precisely in reference to this that the conscience always finds its foundation and justification.

The Gospel's "convincing concerning sin" under the influence of the Spirit of truth can be accomplished in man in no other way except through the conscience. If the conscience is upright, it serves "to resolve according to truth the moral problems which arise both in the life of individuals and from social relationships"; then "persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by the objective standards of moral conduct."¹⁶⁷

A result of an upright conscience is, first of all, to call good and evil by their proper name, as we read in the same Pastoral Constitution:

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Heb 9:14.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Gen 2:9, 17.

¹⁶⁷ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 16.

"whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or wilful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons"; and having called by name the many different sins that are so frequent and widespread in our time, the Constitution adds: "All these things and others of their kind are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonour to the Creator"¹⁶⁸

By calling by their proper name the sins that most dishonour man, and by showing that they are a moral evil that weighs negatively on any balance-sheet of human progress, the Council also describes all this as a stage in "a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness," which characterizes "all of human life, whether individual or collective."¹⁶⁹ The 1983 Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on reconciliation and penance specified even more clearly the personal and social significance of human sin.¹⁷⁰

44. In the Upper Room, on the eve of his Passion and again on the evening of Easter Day, Jesus Christ spoke of the Holy Spirit as the one who bears witness that in human history sin continues to exist. Yet sin has been subjected to the saving power of the Redemption. "Convincing the world concerning sin" does not end with the fact that sin is called by its right name and identified for what it is throughout its entire range. In convincing the world concerning sin the Spirit of truth comes into contact with the voice of human consciences. By following this path we come to a demonstration of the roots of sin, which are to be found in man's inmost being, as described by the same Pastoral Constitution: "The truth is that the imbalances under which the modern world labours are linked with that more basic imbalance rooted in the heart of man. For in man himself many elements wrestle with one another. Thus, on the one hand, as a creature he experiences his limitations in a multitude of ways. On the other, he feels himself to be boundless in his desires and summoned to a higher life. Pulled by manifold attractions, he is constantly forced to choose among them and to renounce some.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., n. 27.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, n. 13.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), 16: AAS 77 (1985), pp. 213-217.

Indeed, as a weak and sinful being, he often does what he would not, and fails to do what he would."¹⁷¹ The Conciliar text is here referring to the well-known words of St. Paul.¹⁷² The "convincing concerning sin" which accompanies the human conscience in every careful reflection upon itself thus leads to the discovery of sin's roots in man, as also to the discovery of the way in which the conscience has been conditioned in the course of history. In this way we discover that original reality of sin of which we have already spoken. The Holy Spirit "convincing concerning sin" in relation to the mystery of man's origins, showing the fact that man is a created being, and therefore in complete ontological and ethical dependence upon the Creator. The Holy Spirit reminds us, at the same time, of the hereditary sinfulness of human nature. But the Holy Spirit the Counsellor "convincing concerning sin" always in relation to the Cross of Christ. In the context of this relationship Christianity rejects any "fatalism" regarding sin. As the Council teaches: "A monumental struggle against the powers of darkness pervades the whole history of man. The battle was joined from the very origins of the world and will continue until the last day, as the Lord has attested."¹⁷³ "But the Lord himself came to free and strengthen man."¹⁷⁴ Man, therefore, far from allowing himself to be "ensnared" in his sinful condition, by relying upon the voice of his own conscience "is obliged to wrestle constantly if he is to cling to what is good. Nor can he achieve his own interior integrity without valiant efforts and the help of God's grace."¹⁷⁵ The Council rightly sees sin as a factor of alienation which weighs heavily on man's personal and social life. But at the same time it never tires of reminding us of the possibility of victory.

45. The Spirit of truth, who "convincing the world concerning sin," comes into contact with that laborious effort on the part of the human conscience which the Conciliar texts speak of so graphically. This laborious effort of conscience also determines the paths of human conversion: turning one's back on sin, in order to restore truth and love in man's very heart. We know that recognising evil in ourselves sometimes demands a great effort. We know that conscience not only commands and forbids but also Judges in the light of interior dictates and prohibitions. It is also the source of remorse: man suffers interiorly because of the evil he has committed. Is not this suffering, as

¹⁷¹ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 10.

¹⁷² Cf. Rom 7:14-15, 19.

¹⁷³ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 37.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 13.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 37.

it were, a distant echo of that "repentance at having created man" which in anthropomorphic language the Sacred Book attributes to God? Is it not an echo of that "reprobation" which is interiorized in the "heart" of the Trinity and by virtue of the eternal love is translated into the suffering of the Cross, into Christ's obedience unto death? When the Spirit of truth permits the human conscience to share in that suffering, the suffering of the conscience becomes particularly profound, but also particularly salvific. Then, by means of an act of perfect contrition, the authentic conversion of the heart is accomplished: this is the evangelical "*metanoia*."

The laborious effort of the human heart, the laborious effort of the conscience in which this "*metanoia*," or conversion, takes place, is a reflection of that process whereby reprobation is transformed into salvific love, a love which is capable of suffering. The hidden giver of this saving power is the Holy Spirit: he whom the Church calls "the light of consciences" penetrates and fills "the depths of the human heart."¹⁷⁶ Through just such a conversion in the Holy Spirit a person becomes open to forgiveness, to the remission of sins. And in all this wonderful dynamism of conversion-forgiveness there is confirmed the truth of what St. Augustine writes concerning the mystery of man, when he comments on the words of the Psalm: "The abyss calls to the abyss."¹⁷⁷ Precisely with regard to these "unfathomable depths" of man, of the human conscience, the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit is accomplished. The Holy Spirit "comes" by virtue of Christ's "departure" in the Paschal Mystery: he comes in each concrete case of conversion-forgiveness, by virtue of the sacrifice of the Cross. For in this sacrifice "the blood of Christ...purifies your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."¹⁷⁸ Thus there are continuously fulfilled the words about the Holy Spirit as "another Counsellor," the words spoken in the Upper Room to the Apostles and indirectly spoken to everyone: "You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Sequence of Pentecost: *Reple Cordis Intirna*.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. St. Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps. XLI*, 13: CCL, 38, 470: "What is the abyss, and what does the abyss invoke? If abyss means depth, do we not consider that perhaps the heart of man is an abyss? What indeed is more deep than this abyss? Men can speak, can be seen through the working of their members, can be heard in conversation; but whose thought can be penetrated, whose heart can be read?"

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Heb 9:14.

¹⁷⁹ Jn 14:17.

6. *The Sin Against the Holy Spirit*

46. Against the background of what has been said so far, certain other words of Jesus, shocking and disturbing ones, become easier to understand. We might call them the words of "unforgiveness." They are reported for us by the Synoptics in connection with a particular sin which is called "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." This is how they are reported in their three versions:

Matthew: "Whoever says a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."¹⁸⁰

Mark: "All sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."¹⁸¹

Luke: "Every one who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven."¹⁸²

Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit unforgivable? How should this blasphemy be understood? St. Thomas Aquinas replies that it is a question of a sin that is "unforgivable by its very nature, insofar as it excludes the elements through which the forgiveness of sin takes place."¹⁸³

According to such an exegesis, "blasphemy" does not properly consist in offending against the Holy Spirit in words; it consists rather in the refusal to accept the salvation which God offers to man through the Holy Spirit, working through the power of the Cross. If man rejects the "convincing concerning sin" which comes from the Holy Spirit and which has the power to save, he also rejects the "coming" of the Counsellor -- that "coming" which was accomplished in the Paschal Mystery, in union with the redemptive power of Christ's Blood: the Blood which "purifies the conscience from dead works."

¹⁸⁰ Mt 12:31f.

¹⁸¹ Mk 3:28f.

¹⁸² Lk 12:10.

¹⁸³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theo.*IIa-IIae, q. 14, a. 3: cf. St. Augustine, *Epist.* 185, 11, 48-49: PL 33, 814f.; St. Bonaventure *Comment. in Evang. S. Lucae*, Ch. XIV, 15-16: *Ad Claras Aquas* VII, 314f.

We know that the result of such a purification is the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, whoever rejects the Spirit and the Blood remains in "dead works," in sin. And the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit consists precisely in the radical refusal to accept this forgiveness, of which he is the intimate giver and which presupposes the genuine conversion which he brings about in the conscience. If Jesus says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven either in this life or in the next, it is because this "non-forgiveness" is linked, as to its cause, to "non-repentance," in other words to the radical refusal to be converted. This means the refusal to come to the sources of Redemption, which nevertheless remain "always" open in the economy of salvation in which the mission of the Holy Spirit is accomplished. The Spirit has infinite power to draw from these sources: "he will take what is mine," Jesus said. In this way he brings to completion in human souls the work of the Redemption accomplished by Christ, and distributes its fruits. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, then, is the sin committed by the person who claims to have a "right" to persist in evil -- in any sin at all -- and who thus rejects Redemption. One closes oneself up in sin, thus making impossible one's conversion, and consequently the remission of sins, which one considers not essential or not important for one's life. This is a state of spiritual ruin, because blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not allow one to escape from one's self-imposed imprisonment and open oneself to the divine sources of the purification of consciences and of the remission of sins.

47. The action of the Spirit of truth, which works toward salvific "convincing concerning sin," encounters in a person in this condition an interior resistance, as it were an impenetrability of conscience, a state of mind which could be described as fixed by reason of a free choice. This is what Sacred Scripture usually calls "hardness of heart."¹⁸⁴ In our own time this attitude of mind and heart is perhaps reflected in the loss of the sense of sin, to which the Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* devotes many pages.¹⁸⁵ Pope Pius XII had already declared that "the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin,"¹⁸⁶ and this loss goes hand in hand with the "loss of the sense of God." In the Exhortation just mentioned we read: "In fact, God is the origin and the supreme end of man, and man carries in himself a divine seed. Hence it is the reality of God that reveals and illustrates the mystery of man. It is therefore vain to hope that there

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Ps 81/80:13; Jer 7:24; Mk 3:5.

¹⁸⁵ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), n. 18: AAS 77 (1985), pp. 224-228.

¹⁸⁶ Pius XII, Radio Message to the National Catechetical Congress of the United States of America in Boston (October 26, 1946): *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi*, VIII (1946), 228.

will take root a sense of sin against man and against human values, if there is no sense of offence against God, namely the true sense of sin."¹⁸⁷

Hence the Church constantly implores from God the grace that integrity of human consciences will not be lost, that their healthy sensitivity with regard to good and evil will not be blunted. This integrity and sensitivity are profoundly linked to the intimate action of the Spirit of truth. In this light the exhortations of St. Paul assume particular eloquence: "Do not quench the Spirit"; "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit."¹⁸⁸ But above all the Church constantly implores with the greatest fervour that there will be no increase in the world of the sin that the Gospel calls "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." Rather, she prays that it will decrease in human souls -- and consequently in the forms and structures of society itself -- and that it will make room for that openness of conscience necessary for the saving action of the Holy Spirit. The Church prays that the dangerous sin against the Spirit will give way to a holy readiness to accept his mission as the Counsellor, when he comes to "convince the world concerning sin, and righteousness and judgment."

48. In his farewell discourse Jesus linked these three areas of "convincing" as elements of the mission of the Paraclete: sin, righteousness and judgment. They mark out the area of that *mysterium pietatis* that in human history is opposed to sin, to the mystery of iniquity.¹⁸⁹ On the one hand, as St. Augustine says, there is "love of self to the point of contempt of God"; on the other, "love of God to the point of contempt of self."¹⁹⁰ The Church constantly lifts up her prayer and renders her service in order that the history of consciences and the history of societies in the great human family will not descend toward the pole of sin, by the rejection of God's commandments "to the point of contempt of God," but rather will rise toward the love in which the Spirit that gives life is revealed.

Those who let themselves be "convinced concerning sin" by the Holy Spirit, also allow themselves to be convinced "concerning righteousness and judgment." The Spirit of truth who helps human beings, human consciences, to know the truth concerning sin, at the same time enables them to know the truth about that righteousness

¹⁸⁷ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), n. 18: AAS 77 (1985), pp. 225f

¹⁸⁸ I Thess 5:19; Eph 4:30.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), nn. 14-22: AAS 77 (1985), pp. 211-233

¹⁹⁰ Cf. St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XIV 28: CCL 48 451

which entered human history in Jesus Christ. In this way, those who are "convinced concerning sin" and who are converted through the action of the Counsellor are, in a sense, led out of the range of the "judgment" that "judgment" by which "the ruler of this world is judged."¹⁹¹ In the depths of its divine-human mystery, conversion means the breaking of every fetter by which sin binds man to the whole of the mystery of iniquity.

Those who are converted, therefore, are led by the Holy Spirit out of the range of the "judgment," and introduced into that righteousness which is in Christ Jesus, and is in him precisely because he receives it from the Father,¹⁹² as a reflection of the holiness of the Trinity. This is the righteousness of the Gospel and of the Redemption, the righteousness of the Sermon on the Mount and of the Cross, which effects the purifying of the conscience through the Blood of the Lamb. It is the righteousness which the Father gives to the Son and to all those united with him in truth and in love.

In this righteousness the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, who "convinces the world concerning sin," reveals himself and makes himself present in man as the Spirit of eternal life.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Jn 16:11.

¹⁹² Cf. Jn 16:15.

PART III: THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES LIFE

1. Reason for the Jubilee of the Year 2000: Christ Who Was Conceived of the Holy Spirit

49. The Church's mind and heart turn to the Holy Spirit as this twentieth century draws to a close and the third Millennium since the coming of Jesus Christ into the world approaches, and as we look toward the great Jubilee with which the Church will celebrate the event. For according to the computation of time this coming is measured as an event belonging to the history of man on earth. The measurement of time in common use defines years, centuries and millennia according to whether they come before or after the birth of Christ. But it must also be remembered that for us Christians this event indicates, as St. Paul says, the "fullness of time,"¹⁹³ because in it human history has been wholly permeated by the "measurement" of God himself: a transcendent presence of the "eternal now." He "who is, who was, and who is to come"; he who is "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."¹⁹⁴ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."¹⁹⁵ "When the time had finally come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman...so that we might receive adoption as sons."¹⁹⁶ And this Incarnation of the Son-Word came about "by the power of the Holy Spirit."

The two Evangelists to whom we owe the narrative of the birth and infancy of Jesus of Nazareth express themselves on this matter in an identical way. According to Luke, at the Annunciation of the birth of Jesus, Mary asks: "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" and she receives this answer: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the

¹⁹³ Cf. Gal 4:4.

¹⁹⁴ Rev 1:8; 22:13.

¹⁹⁵ Jn 3:16.

¹⁹⁶ Gal 4:4f.

power of the Most High will overshadow you: therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."¹⁹⁷

Matthew narrates directly: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit."¹⁹⁸ Disturbed by this turn of events, Joseph receives the following explanation in a dream: "Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."¹⁹⁹

Thus from the beginning the Church confesses the mystery of the Incarnation, this key-mystery of the faith, by making reference to the Holy Spirit. The Apostles' Creed says: "He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary." Similarly, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed professed: "By the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

"By the power of the Holy Spirit" there became man he whom the Church, in the words of the same Creed, professes to be the Son, of the same substance as the Father: "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made." He was made man by becoming "incarnate from the Virgin Mary." This is what happened when "the fullness of time had come."

50. The great Jubilee at the close of the second Millennium, for which the Church is already preparing, has a directly Christological aspect: for it is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. At the same time it has a pneumatological aspect, since the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished "by the power of the Holy Spirit." It was "brought about" by that Spirit -- consubstantial with the Father and the Son -- who, in the absolute mystery of the Triune God, is the Person-love, the uncreated gift, who is the eternal source of every gift that comes from God in the order of creation, the direct principle and, in a certain sense, the subject of God's self-communication in the order of grace. The mystery of the Incarnation constitutes the climax of this giving, this divine self-communication.

The conception and birth of Jesus Christ are in fact the greatest work accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the history of creation and salvation: the supreme grace "the grace of union," source of every other

¹⁹⁷ Lk 1:34f.

¹⁹⁸ Mt 1:18.

¹⁹⁹ Mt 1:20f.

grace, as St. Thomas explains.²⁰⁰ The great Jubilee refer to this work and also -- if we penetrate its depths -- to the author of this work, to the person of the Holy Spirit.

For the "fullness of time" is matched by a particular fullness of the self-communication of the Triune God in the Holy Spirit. "By the power of the Holy Spirit" the mystery of the "hypostatic union" is brought about -- that is, the union of the divine nature and the human nature, of the divinity and the humanity in the one Person of the Word-Son. When at the moment of the Annunciation Mary utters her "fiat": "Be it done unto me according to your word,"²⁰¹ she conceives in a virginal way a man, the Son of Man, who is the Son of God. By means of this "humanization" of the Word-Son the self-communication of God reaches its definitive fullness in the history of creation and salvation. This fullness acquires a special wealth and expressiveness in the text of John's Gospel: "The Word became flesh."²⁰² The Incarnation of God the Son signifies the taking up into unity with God not only of human nature, but in this human nature, in a sense, of everything that is "flesh": the whole of humanity, the entire visible and material world. The Incarnation, then, also has a cosmic significance, a cosmic dimension. The "first-born of all creation,"²⁰³ becoming incarnate in the individual humanity of Christ, unites himself in some way with the entire reality of man, which is also "flesh"²⁰⁴ -- and in this reality with all "flesh," with the whole of creation.

51. All this is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit, and so is part of the great Jubilee to come. The Church cannot prepare for the Jubilee in any other way than in the Holy Spirit. What was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit "in the fullness of time" can only through the Spirit's power now emerge from the memory of the Church. By his power it can be made present in the new phase of man's history on earth: the year 2000 from the birth of Christ.

The Holy Spirit, who with his power overshadowed the virginal body of Mary, bringing about in her the beginning of her divine Motherhood, at the same time made her heart perfectly obedient to that self-communication of God which surpassed every human idea and faculty.

²⁰⁰ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theo.* IIIa, q. 2, aa. 10-12; q. 6, a. 6; q. 7, a. 13.

²⁰¹ Lk 1:38.

²⁰² Jn1:14.

²⁰³ Col 1:15.

²⁰⁴ Cf., for example, Gen 9: 11; Deut 5:26; Job 34:15; Is 40:6; 42:10; Ps 145/144:21; Lk 3:6; 1 Pet 1:24.

"Blessed is she who believed!":²⁰⁵ thus Mary is greeted by her cousin Elizabeth, herself "full of the Holy Spirit."²⁰⁶ In the words of greeting addressed to her "who believed" we seem to detect a distant (but in fact very close) contrast with all those about whom Christ will say that "they do not believe."²⁰⁷ Mary entered the history of the salvation of the world through the obedience of faith. And faith, in its deepest essence, is the openness of the human heart to the gift: to God's self-communication in the Holy Spirit. St. Paul writes: "The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."²⁰⁸ When the Triune God opens himself to man in the Holy Spirit, this opening of God reveals and also gives to the human creature the fullness of freedom. This fullness was manifested in a sublime way precisely through the faith of Mary, through the "obedience of faith":²⁰⁹ truly, "Blessed is she who believed!"

2. Reason for the Jubilee: Grace Has Been Made Manifest

52. In the mystery of the Incarnation the work of the Spirit "who gives life" reaches its highest point. It is not possible to give life, which in its fullest form is in God, except by making it the life of a Man, as Christ is in his humanity endowed with personhood by the Word in the hypostatic union. And at the same time, with the mystery of the Incarnation there opens in a new way the source of this divine life in the history of mankind: the Holy Spirit. The Word, "the first-born of all creation," becomes "the first-born of many brethren."²¹⁰ And thus he also becomes the head of the Body which is the Church, which will be born on the Cross and revealed on the day of Pentecost -- and in the Church, he becomes the head of humanity: of the people of every nation, every race, every country and culture, every language and continent, all called to salvation. "The Word became flesh, (that Word in whom) was life and the life was the light of men...to all who received him he gave the power to become the children of God."²¹¹ But all this

²⁰⁵ Lk 1:45.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Lk 1:41.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Jn 16:9.

²⁰⁸ 2 Cor 3:17.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Rom 1:5.

²¹⁰ Rom 8:29.

²¹¹ Cf. Jn 1:14,4, 12f.

was accomplished and is unceasingly accomplished "by the power of the Holy Spirit."

For as St. Paul teaches, "all who are led by the Spirit of God" are "children of God."²¹² The filiation of divine adoption is born in man on the basis of the mystery of the Incarnation, therefore through Christ the eternal Son. But the birth, or rebirth, happens when God the Father "sends the Spirit of his Son into our hearts."²¹³ Then "we receive a spirit of adopted sons by which we cry 'Abba, Father!'"²¹⁴ Hence the divine filiation planted in the human soul through sanctifying grace is the work of the Holy Spirit. "It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ."²¹⁵ Sanctifying grace is the principle and source of man's new life: divine, supernatural life

The giving of this new life is as it were God's definitive answer to the Psalmist's words, which in a way echo the voice of all creatures: "When you send forth your Spirit, they shall be created; and you shall renew the face of the earth."²¹⁶ He who in the mystery of creation gives life to man and the cosmos in its many different forms, visible and invisible, again renews this life through the mystery of the Incarnation. Creation is thus completed by the Incarnation and since that moment is permeated by the powers of the Redemption, powers which fill humanity and all creation. This is what we are told by St. Paul, whose cosmic and theological vision seems to repeat the words of the ancient Psalm: creation "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God,"²¹⁷ that is, those whom God has "foreknown" and whom he "has predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son."²¹⁸ Thus there is a supernatural "adoption," of which the source is the Holy Spirit, love and gift. As such he is given to man. And in the superabundance of the uncreated gift there begins in the heart of all human beings that particular created gift whereby they "become partakers of the divine nature."²¹⁹ Thus human life becomes permeated, through participation, by the divine life, and itself acquires a divine, supernatural dimension. There is granted the new life, in which as a sharer in the mystery of Incarnation "man has access to the

²¹² Cf. Rom 8:14.

²¹³ Cf. Gal 4:6; Rom 5:5; 2 Cor 1:22.

²¹⁴ Rom 8:15.

²¹⁵ Rom 8:16f.

²¹⁶ Cf. Ps 104/103:30.

²¹⁷ Rom 8:19.

²¹⁸ Rom 8:29.

²¹⁹ Cf. 2 Pet 1:4.

Father in the Holy Spirit."²²⁰ Thus there is a close relationship between the Spirit who gives life and sanctifying grace and the manifold supernatural vitality which derives from it in man: between the uncreated Spirit and the created human spirit.

53. All this may be said to fall within the scope of the great Jubilee mentioned above. For we must go beyond the historical dimension of the event considered in its surface value. Through the Christological content of the event we have to reach the pneumatological dimension, seeing with the eyes of faith the two thousand years of the action of the Spirit of truth, who down the centuries has drawn from the treasures of the Redemption achieved by Christ and given new life to human beings, bringing about in them adoption in the only-begotten Son, sanctifying them, so that they can repeat with St. Paul: "We have received ...the Spirit which is from God."²²¹

But as we follow this reason for the Jubilee, we cannot limit ourselves to the two thousand years which have passed since the birth of Christ. We need to go further back, to embrace the whole of the action of the Holy Spirit even before Christ -- from the beginning, throughout the world, and especially in the economy of the Old Covenant. For this action has been exercised, in every place and at every time, indeed in every individual, according to the eternal plan of salvation, whereby this action was to be closely linked with the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, which in its turn exercised its influence on those who believed in the future coming of Christ. This is attested to especially in the Letter to the Ephesians.²²² Grace, therefore, bears within itself both a Christological aspect and a pneumatological one, which becomes evident above all in those who expressly accept Christ: "In him [in Christ] you...were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it."²²³

But, still within the perspective of the great Jubilee, we need to look further and go further afield, knowing that "the wind blows where it wills," according to the image used by Jesus in his conversation with Nicodemus.²²⁴ The Second Vatican Council, centred primarily on the theme of the Church, reminds us of the Holy Spirit's activity also "outside the visible body of the Church." The council speaks precisely

²²⁰ Cf. Eph 2:18; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, n. 2.

²²¹ Cf. 1 Cor 2:12.

²²² Cf. Eph 1:3-14.

²²³ Eph 1:13f.

²²⁴ Cf. Jn 3:8.

of "all people of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this Paschal Mystery."²²⁵

54. "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."²²⁶ These words were spoken by Jesus in another conversation, the one with the Samaritan woman. The great Jubilee to be celebrated at the end of this Millennium and at the beginning of the next ought to constitute a powerful call to all those who "worship God in spirit and truth." It should be for everyone a special occasion for meditating on the mystery of the Triune God, who in himself is wholly transcendent with regard to the world, especially the visible world. For he is absolute Spirit, "God is spirit";²²⁷ and also, in such a marvellous way, he is not only close to this world but present in it, and in a sense immanent, penetrating it and giving it life from within. This is especially true in relation to man: God is present in the intimacy of man's being, in his mind, conscience and heart: an ontological and psychological reality, in considering which St. Augustine said of God that he was "closer than my inmost being."²²⁸ These words help us to understand better the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: "God is spirit." Only the Spirit can be "closer than my spiritual experience. Only the spirit can be so permanent in man and in the world, while remaining inviolable and immutable in his absolute transcendence.

But in Jesus Christ the divine presence in the world and in man has been made manifest in a new way and in visible form. In him "the grace of God has appeared indeed."²²⁹ The love of God the Father, as a gift, infinite grace, source of life, has been made visible in Christ, and in his humanity that love has become "part" of the universe, the human family and history. This appearing of grace in human history, through Jesus Christ, has been accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is the source of all God's salvific activity in the world: he, the "hidden God,"²³⁰ who as love and gift "fills the universe."²³¹ The Church's entire life, as will appear in the great Jubilee, means going to

²²⁵ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22; cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 16.

²²⁶ Jn 4:24.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Cf. St. Augustine, *Confess.*, III, 6, 11: CCL 27, 33.

²²⁹ Cf. Tit 2:11.

²³⁰ Cf. Is 45:15.

²³¹ Cf. Wis 1:7.

meet the invisible God, the hidden God: a meeting with the Spirit "who gives life."

**3. *The Holy Spirit in Man's Inner Conflict:
"For the desires of the flesh are against
the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are
against the flesh"***

55. Unfortunately, the history of salvation shows that God's coming close and making himself present to man and the world, that marvellous "condescension" of the Spirit, meets with resistance and opposition in our human reality. How eloquent from this point of view are the prophetic words of the old man Simeon who, inspired by the Spirit, came to the Temple in Jerusalem, in order to foretell in the presence of the new-born Babe of Bethlehem that he "is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, for a sign of contradiction."²³² Opposition to God, who is an invisible Spirit, to a certain degree originates in the very fact of the radical difference of the world from God, that is to say in the world's "visibility" and "materiality" in contrast to him who is "invisible" and "absolute Spirit"; from the world's essential and inevitable imperfection in contrast to him, the perfect being. But this opposition becomes conflict and rebellion on the ethical plane by reason of that sin which takes possession of the human heart, wherein "the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh."²³³ Concerning this sin, the Holy Spirit must "convince the world," as we have already said.

It is St. Paul who describes in a particularly eloquent way the tension and struggle that trouble the human heart. We read in the Letter to the Galatians: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would."²³⁴ There already exists in man, as a being made up of body and spirit, a certain tension, a certain struggle of tendencies between the "spirit" and the "flesh." But this struggle in fact belongs to the heritage of sin, is a consequence of sin and at the same time a confirmation of it. This is part of everyday

²³² Lk 2:27, 34.

²³³ Gal 5:17.

²³⁴ Gal 5:16f.

experience. As the Apostle writes: "Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness... drunkenness, carousing and the like." These are the sins that could be called "carnal." But he also adds others: "enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy."²³⁵ All of this constitutes the "works of the flesh."

But with these works, which are undoubtedly evil, Paul contrasts "the fruit of the Spirit," such as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."²³⁶ From the context it is clear that for the Apostle it is not a question of discriminating against and condemning the body, which with the spiritual soul constitutes man's nature and personal subjectivity. Rather, he is concerned with the morally good or bad works, or better the permanent dispositions -- virtues and vices -- which are the fruit of submission to (in the first case) or of resistance to (in the second case) the saving action of the Holy Spirit. Consequently the Apostle writes: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."²³⁷ And in other passages: "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit"; "You are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you."²³⁸ The contrast that St. Paul makes between life "according to the Spirit" and life "according to the flesh" gives rise to a further contrast: that between "life" and "death." "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace"; hence the warning: "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live."²³⁹

Properly understood, this is an exhortation to live in the truth, that is, according to the dictates of an upright conscience, and at the same time it is a profession of faith in the Spirit of truth as the one who gives life. For the body is "dead because of sin, but your spirits are alive because of righteousness." "So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh."²⁴⁰ Rather we are debtors to Christ, who in the Paschal Mystery has effected our justification,

²³⁵ Cf. Gal 5:9-21.

²³⁶ Gal 5:22f.

²³⁷ Gal 5:25.

²³⁸ Cf. Rom 8:5, 9.

²³⁹ Rom 8:6, 13.

²⁴⁰ Rom 8:10, 12.

obtaining for us the Holy Spirit: "Indeed, we have been bought at a great price."²⁴¹

In the texts of St. Paul there is a superimposing -- and a mutual compenetration -- of the ontological dimension (the flesh and the spirit), the ethical (moral good and evil), and the pneumatological (the action of the Holy Spirit in the order of grace). His words (especially in the Letters to the Romans and Galatians) enable us to know and feel vividly the strength of the tension and struggle going on in man between openness to the action of the Holy Spirit and resistance and opposition to him, to his saving gift. The terms or poles of contrast are, on man's part, his limitation and sinfulness, which are essential elements of his psychological and ethical reality; and on God's part, the mystery of the gift, that unceasing self-giving of divine life in the Holy Spirit. -- Who will win? The one who welcomes the gift.

56. Unfortunately, the resistance to the Holy Spirit which St. Paul emphasises in the interior and subjective dimension as tension, struggle and rebellion taking place in the human heart, finds in every period of history and especially in the modern era its external dimension, which takes concrete form as the content of culture and civilization, as a philosophical system, an ideology, a program for action and for the shaping of human behaviour. It reaches its clearest expression in materialism, both in its theoretical form: as a system of thought, and in its practical form: as a method of interpreting and evaluating facts, and likewise as a program of corresponding conduct. The system which has developed most and carried to its extreme practical consequences this form of thought, ideology and praxis is dialectical and historical materialism, which is still recognized as the essential core of Marxism.

In principle and in fact, materialism radically excludes the presence and action of God, who is spirit, in the world and above all in man. Fundamentally this is because it does not accept God's existence, being a system that is essentially and systematically atheistic. This is the striking phenomenon of our time: atheism, to which the Second Vatican Council devoted some significant pages.²⁴² Even though it is not possible to speak of atheism in a univocal way or to limit it exclusively to the philosophy of materialism, since there exist numerous forms of atheism and the word is perhaps often used in a wrong sense, nevertheless it is certain that a true and proper materialism, understood as a theory which explains reality and

²⁴¹ Cf. 1 Cor 6:20.

²⁴² Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, nn.19, 20, 21.

accepted as the key-principle of personal and social action, is characteristically atheistic. The order of values and the aims of action which it describes are strictly bound to a reading of the whole of reality as "matter." Though it sometimes also speaks of the "spirit" and of "questions of the spirit," as for example in the fields of culture or morality, it does so only insofar as it considers certain facts as derived from matter (*epiphenomena*), since according to this system matter is the one and only form of being. It follows, according to this interpretation, that religion can only be understood as a kind of "idealistic illusion," to be fought with the most suitable means and methods according to circumstances of time and place, in order to eliminate it from society and from man's very heart.

It can be said therefore that materialism is the systematic and logical development of that resistance" and opposition condemned by St. Paul with the words: "The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit." But, as St. Paul emphasises in the second part of his aphorism, this antagonism is mutual: "The desires of the Spirit are against the flesh." Those who wish to live by the Spirit, accepting and corresponding to his salvific activity, cannot but reject the internal and external tendencies and claims of the "flesh," also in its ideological and historical expression as anti-religious "materialism." Against this background so characteristic of our time, in preparing for the great Jubilee we must emphasize the "desires of the spirit," as exhortations echoing in the night of a new time of advent. at the end of which, like two thousand years ago, "every man will see the salvation of God."²⁴³ This is a possibility and a hope that the Church entrusts to the men and women of today. She knows that the meeting or collision between the "desires against the spirit" which mark so many aspects of contemporary civilization, especially in some of its spheres, and "the desires against the flesh," with God's approach to us, his Incarnation, his constantly renewed communication of the Holy Spirit -- this meeting or collision may in many cases be of a tragic nature and may perhaps lead to fresh defeats for humanity. But the Church firmly believes that on God's part there is always a salvific self-giving, a salvific coming and, in some way or other, a salvific "convincing concerning sin" by the power of the Spirit.

57. The Pauline contrast between the "Spirit" and the "flesh" also includes the contrast between "life" and "death." This is a serious problem, and concerning it one must say at once that materialism, as a system of thought, in all its forms, means the acceptance of death as the definitive end of human existence. Everything that is material is corruptible, and therefore the human body (insofar as it is "animal") is

²⁴³ Lk 3:6; cf. Is 40:5.

mortal. If man in his essence is only "flesh," death remains for him an impassable frontier and limit. Hence one can understand how it can be said that human life is nothing but an "existence in order to die."

It must be added that on the horizon of contemporary civilization -- especially in the form that is most developed in the technical and scientific sense -- the signs and symptoms of death have become particularly present and frequent. One has only to think of the arms race and of its inherent danger of nuclear self-destruction. Moreover, everyone has become more and more aware of the grave situation of vast areas of our planet marked by death-dealing poverty and famine. It is a question of problems that are not only economic but also and above all ethical. But on the horizon of our era there are gathering ever darker "signs of death": a custom has become widely established -- in some places it threatens to become almost an institution -- of taking the lives of human beings even before they are born, or before they reach the natural point of death. Furthermore, despite many noble efforts for peace, new wars have broken out and are taking place, wars which destroy the lives or the health of hundreds of thousands of people. And how can one fail to mention the attacks against human life by terrorism, organized even on an international scale?

Unfortunately, this is only a partial and in complete sketch of the picture of death being composed in our age as we come ever closer to the end of the second Millennium of the Christian era. Does there not rise up a new and more or less conscious plea to the life-giving Spirit from the dark shades of materialistic civilization, and especially from those increasing signs of death in the sociological and historical picture in which that civilization has been constructed? At any rate, even independently of the measure of human hopes or despairs, and of the illusions or deceptions deriving from the development of materialistic systems of thought and life, there remains the Christian certainty that the Spirit blows where he wills and that we possess "the first fruits of the Spirit," and that therefore even though we may be subjected to the sufferings of time that passes away, "we groan inwardly as we wait for...the redemption of our bodies,"²⁴⁴ or of all our human essence, which is bodily and spiritual. Yes, we groan, but in an expectation filled with unflagging hope, because it is precisely this human being that God has drawn near to, God who is Spirit. God the Father, "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh."²⁴⁵ At the culmination of the Paschal Mystery, the Son of God, made man and crucified for the sins of the world, appeared in the midst of his Apostles after the Resurrection, breathed on them and

²⁴⁴ Cf. Rom 8:23.

²⁴⁵ Rom 8:3.

said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This "breath" continues forever, for "the Spirit helps us in our weakness."²⁴⁶

4. The Holy Spirit Strengthens the "Inner Man"

58. The mystery of the resurrection and of Pentecost is proclaimed and lived by the Church, which has inherited and which carries on the witness of the Apostles about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. She is the perennial witness to this victory over death which revealed the power of the Holy Spirit and determined his new coming, his new presence in people and in the world. For in Christ's Resurrection the Holy Spirit-Paraclete revealed himself especially as he who gives life: "He who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you."²⁴⁷ In the name of the Resurrection of Christ the Church proclaims life, which manifested itself beyond the limits of death, the life which is stronger than death. At the same time, she proclaims him who gives this life: the Spirit, the Giver of Life; she proclaims him and co-operates with him in giving life. For "although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness,"²⁴⁸ the righteousness accomplished by the Crucified and Risen Christ. And in the name of Christ's Resurrection the Church serves the life that comes from God himself, in close union with and humble service to the Spirit.

Precisely through this service man becomes in an ever new manner the "way of the Church," as I said in the Encyclical on Christ the Redeemer²⁴⁹ and as I now repeat in this present one on the Holy Spirit. United with the Spirit, the Church is supremely aware of the reality of the inner man, of what is deepest and most essential in man, because it is spiritual and incorruptible. At this level the Spirit grafts the "root of immortality,"²⁵⁰ from which the new life springs. This is man's life in God, which, as a fruit of God's salvific self-communication in the Holy Spirit, can develop and flourish only by the Spirit's action. Therefore St. Paul speaks to God on behalf of believers, to whom he declares "I

²⁴⁶ Rom 8:26.

²⁴⁷ Rom 8:11.

²⁴⁸ Rom 8:10.

²⁴⁹ Cf Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (March 4, 1979), n. 14: AAS 71 (1979), pp. 284f.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Wis 15:3.

bow my knees before the Father..., that he may grant you...to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man."²⁵¹

Under the influence of the Holy Spirit this inner, "spiritual," man matures and grows strong. Thanks to the divine self-communication, the human spirit which "knows the secrets of man" meets the "Spirit who searches everything, even the depths of God."²⁵² In this Spirit, who is the eternal gift, the Triune God opens himself to man, to the human spirit. The hidden breath of the divine Spirit enables the human spirit to open in its turn before the saving and sanctifying self-opening of God. Through the gift of grace, which comes from the Holy Spirit, man enters a "new life," is brought into the supernatural reality of the divine life itself and becomes a "dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit," a living temple of God.²⁵³ For through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son come to him and take up their abode with him.²⁵⁴ In the communion of grace with the Trinity, man's "living area" is broadened and raised up to the supernatural level of divine life. Man lives in God and by God: he lives "according to the Spirit," and "sets his mind on the things of the Spirit."

59. Man's intimate relationship with God in the Holy Spirit also enables him to understand himself, his own humanity, in a new way. Thus that image and likeness of God which man is from his very beginning is fully realized.²⁵⁵ This intimate truth of the human being has to be continually rediscovered in the light of Christ who is the prototype of the relationship with God. There also has to be rediscovered in Christ the reason for "full self-discovery through a sincere gift of himself" to others, as the Second Vatican Council writes: precisely by reason of this divine likeness which "shows that on earth man...is the only creature that God wishes for himself" in his dignity as a person, but as one open to integration and social communion.²⁵⁶ The effective

²⁵¹ Cf. Eph 3:14-16.

²⁵² Cf. 1 Cor 2:10f.

²⁵³ Cf. Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Jn 14:23; St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, V, 6, 1: SC 153, pp. 72-80; St. Hilary, *De Trinitate*, VIII, 19, 21: PL 10, 250, 252; St. Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto*, I, 6, 8: PL 16, 752f.; St. Augustine, *Enarr. in Ps. XLIX*, 2: CCL 38, pp. 575f.; St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Ioannis Evangelium*, Bk. I; II: PG 73, 154-158; 246; Bk. IX: PG 74, 262; St. Athanasius, *Oratio III Contra Arianos*, 24: PG 26, 374f.; *Epist. I ad Serapionem*, 24: PG 26, 586f.; Didymus the Blind, *De Trinitate*, II, 6-7: PG 39, 523-530; St. John Chrysostom, *In Epist. ad Romanos Homilia XIII*, 8: PG 60, 519; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theo.* Ia, q. 43, aa. 1, 3-6.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Gen 1:26f.; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theo.* Ia, q. 93, aa. 4, 5, 8.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.24; cf. also n. 25.

knowledge and full implementation of this truth of his being come about only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Man learns this truth from Jesus Christ and puts it into practice in his own life by the power of the Spirit, whom Jesus himself has given to us.

Along this path -- the path of such an inner maturity, which includes the full discovery of the meaning of humanity -- God comes close to man, and permeates more and more completely the whole human world. The Triune God, who "exists" in himself as a transcendent reality of interpersonal gift, giving himself in the Holy Spirit as gift to man, transforms the human world from within, from inside hearts and minds. Along this path the world, made to share in the divine gift, becomes -- as the Council teaches -- "ever more human, ever more profoundly human,"²⁵⁷ while within the world, through people's hearts and minds, the Kingdom develops in which God will be definitively "all in all":²⁵⁸ as gift and love. Gift and love: this is the eternal power of the opening of the Triune God to an and the world, in the Holy Spirit.

As the year 2000 since the birth of Christ draws near, it is a question of ensuring that an ever greater number of people "may fully find themselves...through a sincere gift of self," according to the expression of the Council already quoted. Through the action of the Spirit-Paraclete, may there be accomplished in our world a process of true growth in humanity, in both individual and community life. In this regard Jesus himself "when he prayed to the Father, 'that all may be one...as we are one' (Jn 17:21-22)...implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine persons and the union of the children of God in truth and charity."²⁵⁹ The Council repeats this truth about man, and the Church sees in it a particularly strong and conclusive indication of her own apostolic tasks. For if man is the way of the Church, this way passes through the whole mystery of Christ, as man's divine model. Along this way the Holy Spirit, strengthening in each of us "the inner man," enables man ever more "fully to find himself through a sincere gift of self." These words of the Pastoral Constitution of the Council can be said to sum up the whole of Christian anthropology: that theory and practice, based on the Gospel, in which man discovers himself as belonging to Christ and discovers that in Christ he is raised to the status of a child of God, and so understands better his own dignity as man, precisely because he is the subject of God's approach and presence, the subject of the divine condescension, which contains the prospect and the very root of definitive glorification. Thus it can truly

²⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, nn. 38, 40.

²⁵⁸ Cf. 1 Cor 15:28.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n.24.

be said that "the glory of God is the living man, yet man's life is the vision of God":²⁶⁰ man, living a divine life, is the glory of God, and the Holy Spirit is the hidden dispenser of this life and this glory. The Holy Spirit -- says the great Basil -- "while simple in essence and manifold in his virtues...extends himself without undergoing any diminishing, is present in each subject capable of receiving him as if he were the only one, and gives grace which is sufficient for all."²⁶¹

60. When, under the influence of the Paraclete, people discover this divine dimension of their being and life, both as individuals and as a community, they are able to free themselves from the various determinisms which derive mainly from the materialistic bases of thought, practice and related modes of action. In our age these factors have succeeded in penetrating into man's inmost being, into that sanctuary of the conscience where the Holy Spirit continuously radiates the light and strength of new life in the "freedom of the children of God." Man's growth in this life is hindered by the conditionings and pressures exerted upon him by dominating structures and mechanisms in the various spheres of society. It can be said that in many cases social factors, instead of fostering the development and expansion of the human spirit, ultimately deprive the human spirit of the genuine truth of its being and life -- over which the Holy Spirit keeps vigil -- in order to subject it to the "prince of this world."

The great Jubilee of the year 2000 thus contains a message of liberation by the power of the Spirit, who alone can help individuals and communities to free themselves from the old and new determinisms, by guiding them with the "law of the Spirit, which gives life in Christ Jesus,"²⁶² and thereby discovering and accomplishing the full measure of man's true freedom. For, as St. Paul writes, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."²⁶³ This revelation of freedom and hence of man's true dignity acquires a particular eloquence for Christians and for the Church in a state of persecution -- both in ancient times and in the present -- because the witnesses to divine Truth then become a living proof of the action of the Spirit of truth present in the hearts and minds of the faithful, and they often mark with their own death by martyrdom the supreme glorification of human dignity.

²⁶⁰ Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 20, 7: SC 100/2, p. 648.

²⁶¹ St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, IX, 22: PG 32, 110.

²⁶² Rom 8:2.

²⁶³ 2 Cor 3:17.

Also in the ordinary conditions of society, Christians, as witnesses to man's authentic dignity, by their obedience to the Holy Spirit contribute to the manifold "renewal of the face of the earth," working together with their brothers and sisters in order to achieve and put to good use everything that is good, noble and beautiful in the modern progress of civilization, culture, science, technology and the other areas of thought and human activity.²⁶⁴ They do this as disciples of Christ who -- as the Council writes -- "appointed Lord by his Resurrection...is now at work in the hearts of men through the power of his Spirit. He arouses not only a desire for the age to come but by that very fact, he animates, purifies and strengthens those noble longings too by which the human family strives to make its life more humane and to render the earth submissive to this goal."²⁶⁵ Thus they affirm still more strongly the greatness of man, made in the image and likeness of God, a greatness shown by the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, who "in the fullness of time," by the power of the Holy Spirit, entered into history and manifested himself as true man, he who was begotten before every creature, "through whom are all things and through whom we exist"²⁶⁶

5. The Church as the Sacrament of Intimate Union with God

61. As the end of the second Millennium approaches, an event which should recall to everyone and as it were make present anew the coming of the Word in the fullness of time, the Church once more means to ponder the very essence of her divine-human constitution and of that mission which enables her to share in the messianic mission of Christ, according to the teaching and the ever valid plan of the Second Vatican Council. Following this line, we can go back to the Upper Room, where Jesus Christ reveals the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, and where he speaks of his own "departure" through the Cross as the necessary condition for the Spirit's "coming": "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."²⁶⁷ We have seen that this prediction first came true the evening of Easter day and then during

²⁶⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 53-59.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 38.

²⁶⁶ 1 Cor 8:6.

²⁶⁷ Jn 16:7.

the celebration of Pentecost in Jerusalem, and we have seen that ever since then it is being fulfilled in human history through the Church.

In the light of that prediction, we also grasp the full meaning of what Jesus says, also at the Last Supper, about his new "coming." For it is significant that in the same farewell discourse Jesus foretells not only his "departure" but also his new "coming." His exact words are: "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you."²⁶⁸ And at the moment of his final farewell before he ascends into heaven, he will repeat even more explicitly: "Lo, I am with you," and this "always, to the close of the age."²⁶⁹ This new "coming" of Christ, this continuous coming of his, in order to be with his Apostles, with the Church, this "I am with you always, to the close of the age," does not of course change the fact of his "departure." It follows that departure, after the close of Christ's messianic activity on earth, and it occurs in the context of the predicted sending of the Holy Spirit and in a certain sense forms part of his own mission. And yet it occurs by the power of the Holy Spirit, who makes it possible for Christ, who has gone away, to come now and for ever in a new way. This new coming of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and his constant presence and action in the spiritual life are accomplished in the sacramental reality. In this reality, Christ, who has gone away in his visible humanity, comes, is present and acts in the Church in such an intimate way as to make it his own Body. As such, the Church lives, works and grows "to the close of the age." All this happens through the power of the Holy Spirit.

62. The most complete sacramental expression of the "departure" of Christ through the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection is the Eucharist. In every celebration of the Eucharist his coming, his salvific presence, is sacramentally realized: in the Sacrifice and in Communion. It is accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit, as part of his own mission.²⁷⁰ Through the Eucharist the Holy Spirit accomplishes that "strengthening of the inner man" spoken of in the Letter to the Ephesians.²⁷¹ Through the Eucharist, individuals and communities, by the action of the Paraclete-Counsellor, learn to discover the divine sense of human life, as spoken of by the Council: that sense whereby Jesus Christ "fully reveals man to man himself," suggesting "a certain likeness between the union of the divine persons, and the union of

²⁶⁸ Jn 14:18.

²⁶⁹ Mt 28:20.

²⁷⁰ This is what the "Epiclesis" before the Consecration expresses: "Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ" (Eucharistic Prayer II).

²⁷¹ Cf. Eph 3:16.

God's children in truth and charity."²⁷² This union is expressed and made real especially through the Eucharist, in which man shares in the sacrifice of Christ which this celebration actualizes, and he also learns to "find himself...through a...gift of himself,"²⁷³ through communion with God and with others, his brothers and sisters.

For this reason the early Christians, right from the days immediately following the coming down of the Holy Spirit, "devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and the prayers," and in this way they formed a community united by the teaching of the Apostles.²⁷⁴ Thus "they recognized" that their Risen Lord, who had ascended into heaven, came into their midst anew in that Eucharistic community of the Church and by means of it. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church from the beginning expressed and confirmed her identity through the Eucharist. And so it has always been, in every Christian generation, down to our own time, down to this present period when we await the end of the second Christian Millennium. Of course, we unfortunately have to acknowledge the fact that the Millennium which is about to end is the one in which there have occurred the great separations between Christians. All believers in Christ, therefore, following the example of the Apostles, must fervently strive to conform their thinking and action to the will of the Holy Spirit, "the principle of the Church's unity,"²⁷⁵ so that all who have been baptized in the one Spirit in order to make up one body may be brethren joined in the celebration of the same Eucharist, "a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity!"²⁷⁶

63. Christ's Eucharistic presence, his sacramental "I am with you," enables the Church to discover ever more deeply her own mystery, as shown by the whole ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, whereby "the Church is in Christ as a sacrament or sign and instrument of the intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race."²⁷⁷ As a sacrament, the Church is a development from the Paschal Mystery of Christ's "departure," living by his ever new "coming" by the power of the Holy Spirit, within the same mission of the Paraclete-Spirit of

²⁷² Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 24.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Acts 2:42.

²⁷⁵ Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 2.

²⁷⁶ St. Augustine, *In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus XXVI*, 13, CCL 36, p. 266; cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 47.

²⁷⁷ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1.

truth. Precisely this is the essential mystery of the Church, as the Council professes.

While it is through creation that God is he in whom we all "live and move and have our being,"²⁷⁸ in its turn the power of the Redemption endures and develops in the history of man and the world in a double "rhythm" as it were, the source of which is found in the Eternal Father. On the one hand there is the rhythm of the mission of the Son, who came into the world and was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit; and on the other hand there is also the rhythm of the mission of the Holy Spirit, as he was revealed definitively by Christ. Through the "departure" of the Son, the Holy Spirit came and continues to come as Counsellor and Spirit of truth. And in the context of his mission, as it were within the indivisible presence of the Holy Spirit, the Son, who "had gone away" in the Paschal Mystery, "comes" and is continuously present in the mystery of the Church, at times concealing himself and at times revealing himself in her history, and always directing her steps. All of this happens in a sacramental way, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who, "drawing from the wealth of Christ's Redemption," constantly gives life. As the Church becomes ever more aware of this mystery, she sees herself more clearly, above all as a sacrament.

This also happens because, by the will of her Lord, through the individual sacraments the Church fulfils her salvific ministry to man. This sacramental ministry, every time it is accomplished, brings with it the mystery of the "departure" of Christ through the Cross and the Resurrection, by virtue of which the Holy Spirit comes. He comes and works: "He gives life." For the sacraments signify grace and confer grace: they signify life and give life. The Church is the visible dispenser of the sacred signs, while the Holy Spirit acts in them as the invisible dispenser of the life which they signify. Together with the Spirit, Christ Jesus is present and acting.

64. If the Church is the sacrament of intimate union with God, she is such in Jesus Christ, in whom this same union is accomplished as a salvific reality. She is such in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The fullness of the salvific reality, which is Christ in history, extends in a sacramental way in the power of the Spirit Paraclete. In this way the Holy Spirit is "another Counsellor," or new Counsellor, because through his action the Good News takes shape in human minds and hearts and extends through history. In all this it is the Holy Spirit who gives life.

²⁷⁸ Acts 17:28.

Dominum et vivificantem

Pope John Paul II

When we use the word "sacrament" in reference to the Church, we must bear in mind that in the texts of the Council the sacramentality of the Church appears as distinct from the sacramentality that is proper, in the strict sense, to the Sacraments. Thus we read: "The Church is...in the nature of a sacrament -- a sign and instrument of communion with God." But what matters and what emerges from the analogical sense in which the word is used in the two cases is the relationship which the Church has with the power of the Holy Spirit, who alone gives life: the Church is the sign and instrument of the presence and action of the life-giving Spirit.

Vatican II adds that the Church is "a sacrament. . . of the unity of all mankind. "Obviously it is a question of the unity which the human race which in itself is differentiated in various ways -- has from God and in God. This unity has its roots in the mystery of creation and acquires a new dimension in the mystery of the Redemption, which is ordered to universal salvation. Since God "wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,"²⁷⁹ the Redemption includes all humanity and in a certain way all of creation. In the same universal dimension of Redemption the Holy Spirit is acting, by virtue of the "departure of Christ." Therefore the Church, rooted through her own mystery in the Trinitarian plan of salvation with good reason regards herself as the "sacrament of the unity of the whole human race." She knows that she is such through the power of the Holy Spirit, of which power she is a sign and instrument in the fulfilment of God's salvific plan.

In this way the "condescension" of the infinite Trinitarian Love is brought about: God, who is infinite Spirit, comes close to the visible world. The Triune God communicates himself to man in the Holy Spirit from the beginning through his "image and likeness." Under the action of the same Spirit, man, and through him the created world, which has been redeemed by Christ, draw near to their ultimate destinies in God. The Church is "a sacrament, that is sign and instrument" of this coming together of the two poles of creation and redemption, God and man. She strives to restore and strengthen the unity at the very roots of the human race: in the relationship of communion that man has with God as his Creator, Lord and Redeemer. This is a truth which on the basis of the Council's teaching we can meditate on, explain and apply in all the fullness of its meaning in this phase of transition from the second to the third Christian Millennium. And we rejoice to realize ever more clearly that within the work carried out by the Church in the history of salvation, which is part of the history of humanity, the Holy Spirit is present and at work -- he

²⁷⁹ 1 Tim 2:4.

who with the breath of divine life permeates man's earthly pilgrimage and causes all creation, all history, to flow together to its ultimate end, in the infinite ocean of God.

6. The Spirit and the Bride Say: "Come!"

65. The breath of the divine life, the Holy Spirit, in its simplest and most common manner, expresses itself and makes itself felt in prayer. It is a beautiful and salutary thought that, wherever people are praying in the world, there the Holy Spirit is, the living breath of prayer. It is a beautiful and salutary thought to recognize that, if prayer is offered throughout the world, in the past, in the present and in the future, equally widespread is the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, who "breathes" prayer in the heart of man in all the endless range of the most varied situations and conditions, sometimes favourable and sometimes unfavourable to the spiritual and religious life. Many times, through the influence of the Spirit, prayer rises from the human heart in spite of prohibitions and persecutions and even official proclamations regarding the non-religious or even atheistic character of public life. Prayer always remains the voice of all those who apparently have no voice -- and in this voice there always echoes that "loud cry" attributed to Christ by the Letter to the Hebrews.²⁸⁰ Prayer is also the revelation of that abyss which is the heart of man: a depth which comes from God and which only God can fill, precisely with the Holy Spirit. We read in Luke: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."²⁸¹

The Holy Spirit is the gift that comes into man's heart together with prayer. In prayer he manifests himself first of all and above all as the gift that "helps us in our weakness." This is the magnificent thought developed by St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans, when he writes: "For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."²⁸² Therefore, the Holy Spirit not only enables us to pray, but guides us "from within" in prayer: he is present in our prayer and gives it a divine dimension.²⁸³ Thus "he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of

²⁸⁰ Cf. Heb 5:7.

²⁸¹ Lk 11:13.

²⁸² Rom 8:26.

²⁸³ Cf. Origen, *De Oratione*, 2: PG 11, p. 419-423.

the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."²⁸⁴ Prayer through the power of the Holy Spirit becomes the ever more mature expression of the new man, who by means of this prayer participates in the divine life.

Our difficult age has a special need of prayer. In the course of history -- both in the past and in the present -- many men and women have borne witness to the importance of prayer by consecrating themselves to the praise of God and to the life of prayer, especially in monasteries and convents. So, too, recent years have been seeing a growth in the number of people who, in ever more widespread movements and groups, are giving first place to prayer and seeking in prayer a renewal of their spiritual life. This is a significant and comforting sign, for from this experience there is coming a real contribution to the revival of prayer among the faithful, who have been helped to gain a clearer idea of the Holy Spirit as he who inspires in hearts a profound yearning for holiness. In many individuals and many communities there is a growing awareness that, even with all the rapid progress of technological and scientific civilization, and despite the real conquests and goals attained, man is threatened, humanity is threatened. In the face of this danger, and indeed already experiencing the frightful reality of man's spiritual decadence, individuals and whole communities, guided as it were by an inner sense of faith, are seeking the strength to raise man up again, to save him from himself, from his own errors and mistakes that often make harmful his very conquests. And thus they are discovering prayer, in which the "Spirit who helps us in our weakness" manifests himself. In this way the times in which we are living are bringing the Holy Spirit closer to the many who are returning to prayer. And I trust that all will find in the teaching of this Encyclical nourishment for their interior life, and that they will succeed in strengthening, under the action of the Spirit, their commitment to prayer in harmony with the Church and her Magisterium.

66. In the midst of the problems, disappointments and hopes, desertions and returns of these times of ours, the Church remains faithful to the mystery of her birth. While it is an historical fact that the Church came forth from the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost, in a certain sense one can say that she has never left it. Spiritually the event of Pentecost does not belong only to the past: the Church is always in the Upper Room that she bears in her heart. The Church perseveres in preserves, like the Apostles together with Mary, the Mother of Christ, and with those who in Jerusalem were the first seed of the Christian community and who awaited in prayer the coming of the Holy Spirit.

²⁸⁴ Rom 8:27.

The Church perseveres in prayer with Mary. This union of the praying Church with the Mother of Christ has been part of the mystery of the Church from the beginning: we see her present in this mystery as she is present in the mystery of her Son. It is the Council that says to us: "The Blessed Virgin...overshadowed by the Holy Spirit... brought forth...the Son..., he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren (cf. Rom 8:29), namely the faithful. In their birth and development she cooperates with a maternal love"; she is through "his singular graces and offices...intimately united with the Church.... [She] is a model of the Church."²⁸⁵ "The Church, moreover, contemplating Mary's mysterious sanctity, imitating her charity,...becomes herself a mother" and "herself is a virgin, who keeps...the fidelity she has pledged to her Spouse. Imitating the Mother of The Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she preserves with virginal purity an integral faith, a firm hope, and a sincere charity."²⁸⁶

Thus one can understand the profound reason why the Church, united with the Virgin Mother, prays unceasingly as the Bride to her divine Spouse, as the words of the Book of Revelation, quoted by the Council, attest: "The Spirit and the bride say to the Lord Jesus Christ: Come!"²⁸⁷ The Church's prayer is this unceasing invocation, in which "the Spirit himself intercedes for us": in a certain sense, the Spirit himself utters it with the Church and in the Church. For the Spirit is given to the Church in order that through his power the whole community of the People of God, however widely scattered and diverse, may persevere in hope: that hope in which "we have been saved."²⁸⁸ It is the eschatological hope, the hope of definitive fulfilment in God, the hope of the eternal Kingdom, that is brought about by participation in the life of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit, given to the Apostles as the Counsellor, is the guardian and animator of this hope in the heart of the Church.

In the time leading up to the third Millennium after Christ, while "the Spirit and the bride say to the Lord Jesus: Come!" this prayer of theirs is filled, as always, with an eschatological significance, which is also destined to give fullness of meaning to the celebration of the great Jubilee. It is a prayer concerned with the salvific destinies toward which the Holy Spirit by his action opens hearts throughout the history of man on earth. But at the same time this prayer is directed toward a precise moment of history which highlights the "fullness of time"

²⁸⁵ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 63.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 64.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 4; cf. Rev 22:17.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Rom 8:24.

marked by the year 2000. The Church wishes to prepare for this Jubilee in the Holy Spirit, just as the Virgin of Nazareth in whom the Word was made flesh was prepared by the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

67. We wish to bring to a close these considerations in the heart of the Church and in the heart of man. The way of the Church passes through the heart of man, because here is the hidden place of the salvific encounter with the Holy Spirit, with the hidden God, and precisely here the Holy Spirit becomes "a spring of water welling up to eternal life."²⁸⁹ He comes here as the Spirit of truth and as the Paraclete, as he was promised by Christ. From here he acts as Counsellor, Intercessor, Advocate, especially when man, when humanity find themselves before the judgment of condemnation by that "accuser" about whom the Book of Revelation says that "he accuses them day and night before our God."²⁹⁰ "The Holy Spirit does not cease to be the guardian of hope in the human heart: the hope of all human creatures, and especially of those who "have the first fruits of the Spirit" and "wait for the redemption of their bodies."²⁹¹

The Holy Spirit, in his mysterious bond of divine communion with the Redeemer of man, is the one who brings about the continuity of his work: he takes from Christ and transmits to all, unceasingly entering into the history of the world through the heart of man. Here he becomes -- as the liturgical Sequence of the Solemnity of Pentecost proclaims -- the true "father of the poor, giver of gifts, light of hearts"; he becomes the "sweet guest of the soul," whom the Church unceasingly greets on the threshold of the inmost sanctuary of every human being. For he brings "rest and relief" in the midst of toil, in the midst of the work of human hands and minds; he brings "rest" and "ease" in the midst of the heat of the day, in the midst of the anxieties,

²⁸⁹ Cf. Jn 4:14; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 4.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Rev 12:10.

²⁹¹ Cf. Rom 8:23.

struggles and perils of every age; he brings "consolation," when the human heart grieves and is tempted to despair.

And therefore the same Sequence exclaims: "without your aid nothing is in man, nothing is without fault." For only the Holy Spirit "convinces concerning sin," concerning evil, in order to restore what is good in man and in the world: in order to "renew the face of the earth." Therefore, he purifies from everything that "disfigures" man, from "what is unclean"; he heals even the deepest wounds of human existence; he changes the interior dryness of souls, transforming them into the fertile fields of grace and holiness. What is "hard he softens," what is "frozen he warms," what is "wayward he sets anew" on the paths of salvation.²⁹²

Praying thus, the Church unceasingly professes her faith that there exists in our created world a Spirit who is an uncreated gift. He is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son: like the Father and the Son he is uncreated, without limit, eternal, omnipotent, God, Lord.²⁹³ This Spirit of God "fills the universe," and all that is created recognizes in him the source of its own identity, finds in him its own transcendent expression, turns to him and awaits him, invokes him with its own being. Man turns to him, as to the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth and of love, man who lives by truth and by love, and who without the source of truth and of love cannot live. To him turns the Church, which is the heart of humanity, to implore for all and dispense to all those gifts of the love which through him "has been poured into our hearts."²⁹⁴ To him turns the Church, along the intricate paths of man's pilgrimage on earth: she implores, she unceasingly implores uprightness of human acts, as the Spirit's work; she implores the joy and consolation that only he, the true Counsellor, can bring by coming down into people's inmost hearts;²⁹⁵ the Church implores the grace of the virtues that merit heavenly glory, implores eternal salvation, in the full communication of the divine life, to which the Father has eternally "predestined" human beings, created through love in the image and likeness of the Most Holy Trinity.

²⁹² Cf. Sequence *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*.

²⁹³ Cf. Creed *Quicumque*: DS 75.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Rom 5:5.

²⁹⁵ One should mention here the important Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete in Domino*, published by Pope Paul VI on May 9, in the Holy Year 1975; ever relevant is the invitation expressed there "to implore the gift of joy from the Holy Spirit," and likewise "to appreciate the properly spiritual joy that is a fruit of the Holy Spirit": AAS 67 (1975), pp. 289, 302.

Dominum et vivificantem

Pope John Paul II

The Church with her heart which embraces all human hearts implores from the Holy Spirit that happiness which only in God has its complete realization: the joy "that no one will be able to take away,"²⁹⁶ the joy which is the fruit of love, and therefore of God who is love; she implores "the righteousness, the peace and the joy of the Holy Spirit" in which, in the words of St. Paul, consists the Kingdom of God.²⁹⁷

Peace too is the fruit of love: that interior peace, which weary man seeks in his inmost being; that peace besought by humanity, the human family, peoples, nations, continents, anxiously hoping to obtain it in the prospect of the transition from the second to the third Christian Millennium. Since the way of peace passes in the last analysis through love and seeks to create the civilization of love, the Church fixes her eyes on him who is the love of the Father and the Son, and in spite of increasing dangers she does not cease to trust, she does not cease to invoke and to serve the peace of man on earth. Her trust is based on him who, being the Spirit-love, is also the Spirit of peace and does not cease to be present in our human world, on the horizon of minds and hearts, in order to "fill the universe" with love and peace.

Before him I kneel at the end of these considerations, and implore him, as the Spirit of the Father and the Son, to grant to all of us the blessing and grace which I desire to pass on, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, to the sons and daughters of the Church and to the whole human family.

*Given in Rome, at St. Peter's,
on the Solemnity of May 18,
in the year of Pentecost,
the eighth of my Pontificate. 1986,*

²⁹⁶ Cf. Jn 16:22.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22.