

# MEDITATIONS ON THE HOLY GHOST

By Bede Jarrett, O.P.

## *Introduction*

These pages are reprinted from *Meditations for Layfolk.*, a book which seems to be as much in demand today as it was when it first appeared in 1915.

Devotion to the Holy Ghost was a notable feature of Father Bede Jarrett's spirituality. He did much by his sermons and writings to bring before the minds of the faithful the forgotten Paraclete—that divine Force which has no parallel in created nature. The proper mission of the Holy Ghost is to complete creation, to finish, and to make all things perfect. For us individually He is the Sanctifier; we are His temples. He works with divine skill on our wills, and only wilful resistance and obstinacy on our part can obstruct His sanctifying work. His gifts add a new splendour to virtue. In our weakness He is our hope. St Paul links hope with the power of the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:13). By the Holy Ghost we obtain light of mind and force of will by which we can dare to reach out to heroisms beyond our weak nature.

BERNARD DELANY, O.P.

## *The Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost*

Wisdom

Understanding

Counsel

Fortitude

Knowledge

Piety

Fear of the Lord

*The Holy Ghost (Love)*

## GOD'S LOVE PERSONIFIED

The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity is the most mysterious; about Him we seem to hear least and to understand most vaguely. The work of Father and Son, their place in the economy of the divine plan, is simple and evident, at least in its main lines, but of the Holy Spirit it appears as though His precise purpose had not been sufficiently described to us. He is the equal of the Father and the Son, of the same nature, power, substance, eternally existent with them, participating in the same divine life, forming with them the ever-blessed Three-in-One. He represents to our human point of view that wonderful mystery, the personified love that proceeds from Father and from Son for ever, and by this act completes the perfections of God.

We can conceive of no further addition to that being, save power and knowledge and love. Yet we know also that He has His place, not only in the inter-relation (if the word may be allowed) of the Godhead, but in the relationship (though this phrase is certainly inaccurate) that exists between God and us. For since God is one and indivisible, His love for us cannot be other than the love that He has for Himself. In Him there can be no distinction at all. Hence it is that we discover that He loves Himself and us in the love of the Holy Ghost.

His love we see to be nothing else than Himself, unchanging, undying, without shadow of alteration. Sin as we may, we cannot make God love us less. Children though we be of wrath, He cannot help but love us, for the gifts of God, especially the supreme gift of Himself, are without repentance.

## GOD'S LOVE ETERNAL

God cannot cease to love me. That is the most startling fact that our doctrine reveals. Sinner or saint He loves and cannot well help Himself. Magdalen in her sin, Magdalen in her sainthood, was loved by God. The difference between

her position made some difference also in the effect of that love on her, but the love was the same, since it was the Holy Spirit who is the love of the Father and the Son.

Whatever I do, I am loved. But then, if I sin I am unworthy of love? Yes, but I am unworthy always. Nor can He love me for what I am, since in that case I should compel His love, force His will by something external to Himself. In fact, really, if I came to consider, I should find that I was not loved by God because I was good, but that I was good because God loved me. My improvement does not cause God to love me, but is the effect of God having Himself loved me. Consequently, even when I am punished by God, He cannot hate me. It is His very love itself that drives Him (out of the very nature of its perfection) to punish, so that Dante spoke truly when he imagined over the portals of Hell the inscription: 'To rear me was the work of Immortal Power and Love'.

Each of us is, therefore, sure that he is loved eternally, that from God's side that love can suffer no change. How, then, is it that we grow evil, or lose the familiar intercourse that we once had with Him? It is because He has given us the terrible power of erecting as it were a shield between ourselves and His love. He loves for ever the same, but it is we who by our sins have the power to shut off that love from effecting anything good in our souls.

### GOD'S LOVE UNCHANGING

Surely there is something overpowering in the concept of this work of God, this unceasing and unchanging love. I talk of fidelity in friendship as being to me the most beautiful thing on earth. The sight of a lover faithful, despite disillusionment, to his beloved is the most wonderful thing in all the world; this loyalty of soul for soul, despite every toil and stress, good repute and evil; beyond all degradation and above all ambition, when soul has been knit to soul.

*Love is not love  
Which alters, when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.*

Yet this is but a feeble representation of the ineffable union between God and myself. Sinner though I be, He is my lover always. Even my sins cannot break His persistence, can only set a barrier between myself and it, can only by the dangerous gift of my free will prevent its effect from being seen in my soul. But the love of God is with me always, 'in me and within me and around, in million-billowed consentaneousness, the flowing, flowing, flowing' of the Spirit.

How can I hold back, howsoever wrongly I have acted? for His love is the same for ever. As I was deep in His love when I was a child, so also does He love me now.

### *The Holy Ghost (Light)*

### O DIVINEST LIGHT, IMPART

The work of the Spirit has been outlined in the Gospels. Our Lord at His Last Supper, when His teaching seems to have expounded in the full splendour and height of its tremendous mysteries, when, if ever, the Apostles could truly say that He had passed out of the realm of parable and had come into the deepest ways of truth — Our Lord at His Last Supper said that His going away was necessary for the coming of the Paraclete. He had to die and rise and ascend, and then from the right hand of the Father His own work would continue in a ceaseless intercession for all the children of men.

On earth, however, His place would be taken by the Holy Ghost, who should teach the Apostles all things, and bring back to their minds whatever He had taught them. In this way was guaranteed the infallibility and growth in doctrine which are the work of the Spirit.

Our Lord had certainly to temper His doctrine to the minds of His hearers. He could not from the first reveal to them the full meaning of His words. In the beginning, indeed, the need was simply for the main ideas to sink gradually in: then slowly the other less important though necessary truths could be added.

The little that He did teach was not too clearly retained, so that He had frequently to be up-braiding them with not having understood His meaning. The length of His stay with them had not made them always grasp of what spirit they were. What should happen when He was gone? He answers that only His going will set them on their own strength.

## UNTO EVERY FAITHFUL HEART

As the Church grew in the range and depth of her doctrine, so must she for ever grow. The problems that distract her must increase; with each generation they change their expression, for the forms of thought are the most mobile and uncertain of all human construction.

A cathedral lasts longer than a philosophy, a haunting song outlives the latest system of metaphysics. Questions are settled only that the restless mind of man may add another difficulty to the solution that allayed its previous doubt. Rapier-like in its power to find the weak joint in the armour, reason, sharpened by scientific criticism, picks here and there at the composition of the Creed. New conditions, new discoveries, new languages, require new attitudes, new difficulties, new adjustments of old principles. Obviously it is not sufficient to know the rules of the art; the great trouble and anxiety comes in their application.

So, too, is it in the Faith. The articles of belief seem at times to suggest contradictory answers to the problem that happens at the moment to be perplexing our minds. According to one mystery, one solution; according to a second, another. How to choose and select, to decree without fear or favour, without danger of mistake, is the work of the Church.

Not merely in the broad line of the Church, but in the individual soul, the same task must go on — the balance between what has to be discarded as of passing significance and what is of abiding import. I have to discover for myself which is the mere adventitious dressing of some bygone form of thought and which is of enduring truth. Yet not indeed for myself, since in the Church abides for ever the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

## PLENTEOUS STREAMS FROM LOVE'S BRIGHT FLOOD

Thus came the Holy Spirit on the first Whitsunday. He came, we read, in the rush of a great wind and in the form of fire, to typify the illumination of the mind by faith and the impulse given to the will by love. He came to teach all things, to recall to the minds of the Apostles the full doctrine of Christ.

At once, after their reception of His grace, the Apostles become changed men. No longer timid and frightened followers who fled at the first sight of danger and denied with an oath that they had ever known the name of Christ, they now become glad missionaries, declaring themselves willing to suffer in defence of that name. In council chambers and before kings they announce the Gospel.

So, too, when perplexities come as to whether or no they should force on all Christians the ceremonies of the Old Law as being of binding value on the conscience of the New Dispensation, they assemble, discuss, and decree in a phrase that clearly marks their own appreciation of the place they had to take in giving to the world the message of Christ. 'It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.' They and the Holy Spirit are fellow-workers in the apostolate of Christ. The revelation made to them by their Master was but a grain of mustard-seed compared with the full development that should come after. It should grow from that till it included all truth; but the knowledge of every detail of that truth would not at once be necessary, so the gradual unfolding was left to the work of the Spirit.

The work, then, of the Holy Ghost is twofold: it is to inflame the love, and it is to enlighten the mind. Let me wait patiently for this illumination of my spirit by the Holy Spirit, putting no obstacle in the way, praying daily for that illumination which shall light as by a vision my view of life.

## *Gifts of the Holy Ghost*

### COURAGE OR CONFIDENCE IN OMNIPOTENT LOVE

The real difficulty experienced by most of us in keeping up our courage in the unceasing battle of life is that we realize how utterly we depend upon ourselves. Of course it is true that the grace of God will be always with us, that it is never withheld, that there is always a sufficiency of it for us to meet and triumph over every assault of the evil one, yet even so the disquieting thought comes home to us that it is always we ourselves who determine our own actions; so much so, indeed, that if they are worthy of reward, it is we who obtain the reward, but if of punishment, that it is we who suffer.

Says St Thomas with stimulating paradox: 'Not partly by God and partly by man, but altogether by God and

altogether by man'. That is to say, I have to reconcile these two separate truths:

(a) I cannot will anything without God's grace helping me to do it; (b) yet God's help does not take away from me my responsibility in the act, for its moral value will be adjudged to my credit or demerit.

It is then, to repeat, just in the second part of the paradox that the difficulty lies. Conscious as I am of my past failure, I can hardly look forward without dismay to future troubles. Consequently I turn to see if there is anything that the Church teaches that can relieve me from the burden of this discouragement. Is there any doctrine that gives me in any way at all an escape from the terror of my own responsibility?

#### THE SEVENFOLD GIFTS WORK WITHIN ME

To this the Church makes answer that her doctrine of the indwelling of the Spirit of God by means of the Sevenfold Gifts does go a long way to remove the load from my own shoulders, does suggest to me a perfectly true sense in which my soul is ruled not by me but by another. As far, then, as these things can be stated in human language, we may say that the gifts differ from the virtues in this, that the gifts are moved into operation not by me but by God.

When I perform an act of virtue it is obvious that (not excluding God's grace) it is I who perform it, and acquire merit in consequence; but in the movement of the gifts it is not I but God who is the mover. He is the sole mover. In the actual movement of the soul under the influence of the gifts I cannot claim any lot or part, I cannot claim any merit at all. It is He who has His hand on the tiller, who guides, steers, propels. Hence it is He, not I, who has control of my soul. With the four gifts that perfect my intelligence, He illumines my mind; with the one gift that perfects the will, He inflames my desire; and with the two that perfect the passions, He strengthens with His intimate indwelling my emotions of love and fear.

By the instrumentality of the gifts the soul is keyed-up to the level of God, tuned to concert-pitch. Or, to vary the metaphor, the soul is made so responsive to the divine influence that, like some delicate electrical receiver, it registers every passing breath of God. I must remember always that it is His doing, not mine.

#### THE SEVENFOLD GIFTS GUIDE AND RULE ME

Must it therefore be admitted that by the gifts I merit nothing? Surely if this be so it would seem as though I had therefore no need for them. If their influence on my life was only to leave me no better off than before I received them, I might just as well not have had them at all. If in them God is the mover to the exclusion of myself, then it would be absurd for me to expect any reward for what has been absolutely no work of mine. This is true. I do not merit by the gifts. Yet to this I must also add that I can profit by them.

The Holy Spirit lights up my mind and enables me to see, or refines my perception of and responsiveness to His least suggestion. That is His doing so far. Illumination and refinement are entirely His work. But my part comes in later, when I act up to these suggestions or in accordance with this vision. Then I am profiting by the gifts. Suggestion and vision alike are from God. He opens my mind and I see Him everywhere, in a flower, in trouble, in the soul of a sinner.

If in consequence of seeing Him in the sinner, I turn to that sinner and speak kindly of the love that never fails, or if I help him even by my sympathy though I speak no word of spiritual significance, then the good that I achieve, or at least the good I am trying to do, becomes my way of profiting by means of the gifts. This indwelling of the Spirit of God, while it takes from me the control of my soul and hands it over for the moment to God, yet gives me something by which I can love again and be rewarded. I do not merit by the sevenfold gifts, but I do merit through them.

#### *Gifts that perfect Intelligence*

#### SEEING GOD IN ALL THINGS

Out of these sevenfold gifts there are four that perfect the intellectual side of man. They are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and counsel. Of these it is obvious that the last is chiefly given me for the benefit of others, the first three for myself.

The gift of counsel means quite simply that I receive suggestions from the Holy Spirit what advice I am to give to

those who come to consult me. I am made so responsive to the divine Wisdom that I at once perceive what is best for others, in a way that without the gifts I should be wholly unable to do.

Thus it sometimes happens that I am suddenly conscious of words apparently suggested to me from outside, which are as much a surprise to myself as they are of evident comfort to my hearers. The very phrase for which they have been longing, and which alone seems to have the power to enable them to see straight into the entanglement of their affairs, comes trippingly to my tongue, though I am perhaps unacquainted with their circumstances, except for the little that they have been able to tell me.

The gift of knowledge enables me to see God in the natural world of creation, in reason, in the arts and crafts of man, in nature. It is an understanding of God learnt from the material things of life. On the other hand, the gift of understanding allows me to see Him in the supernatural world of faith, in truths and mysteries; while wisdom further acquaints me with the inter-relation between faith and reason, nature and supernature.

#### THE MIND'S CLEAR LIGHT

In these ways God by means of His gifts lights up our minds. Under this illumination I now look out upon creation and find it to be alive with the traces of God's presence. Nature becomes at once the very loveliness of His vesture, and I say to myself that if I can touch but the hem of it I shall be made whole. Even in the relentless preying of beast on beast I see somehow the wonderful work of God. The machinery of man is no longer a sight of ugliness, but becomes coloured by the brightness of His power. It is the child's toy that reproduces on an infinitely smaller scale the creative energy of the Creator.

The linked reasoning of philosophy is the imitation of an infinite intelligence. Then I lift my mind higher to the ampler regions of faith. Here surely is the very splendour of God. In the depths of mysteries that my intelligence is too faulty and finite to fathom, lurk the wonder of His truth and the ways of His wisdom. Justice, mercy, loving-kindness, and overpowering majesty are all crowded upon my imagination by the thought of all that He has revealed to me of Himself. Here, if anywhere, I can at least understand that God is altogether above me.

Then again, the highest gift of all floods my soul with even clearer light, and I see the interrelation of all things. I see how the death of a sparrow, the sunset, the Incarnation, are all parts of a perfect whole. It is not an uplifting of the soul from earth to heaven, but a perception that earth and heaven are themselves the fragments of a larger scheme.

#### THE GIFT OF TRANSFIGURING VISION

These, indeed, are visions such as the gifts that perfect the intelligence evoke in the mind. But it is our business to see that they do not remain barren visions. Just as faith is allowed us that it may lead to life, and as we shall be the more straitly condemned if we do not carry into practice what faith reveals; so also will our judgement be the more severe if with all the light which is vouchsafed to us we yet prefer to walk unheeding in the midst of this wonderful world.

There are very many who find life dull and religion altogether a thing that bores them. Perhaps the reason is that they neglect the vision: it is there before their eyes if they would only look. But for me the world must become transfigured. Life then will be found more easy, less vexatious, will lose that dreary outlook which is the most depressing of all temptations, and which makes me consider it not worth living. I shall at least understand that there is a purpose in existence. Evil and suffering are seen to be parts that require to be handled carefully, that their places in the design may not be overlooked; not ignored, but acknowledged, they are found to be the stepping-stones to greatness. Success and failure have no separate meaning, for the need is for them both.

So that, in all, patience is discovered to be the most perfect virtue to have achieved, patience with others, with oneself, with life, with God. Nor is this state of soul due to a disregard of the circumstances that attend our time on earth, but to a more thorough appreciation of the terms of existence. I see life fuller, enjoy it more. It is the patience not of the wearied voluptuary but of the enraptured lover, who is so sure of his love that he can afford to wait through all time for eternity.

## *The Gifts that perfects Will*

### GOD IS MY STRENGTH

This gift is fortitude, which, as we have already stated in general terms, must be carefully distinguished from the virtue of fortitude. This gift is entirely under the direction of God and excludes altogether on my part any action at all in the operation of the gift. This exclusion of all co-operation seems harder perhaps to understand when the will is in question, as it is in the gift of fortitude. It seems altogether impossible to imagine that God can direct the will and yet that it should not be voluntary.

It is clear, indeed, from the Catholic doctrine of grace, that it is possible for God to move the will so powerfully as to determine not merely that the will shall act, but to determine also that it shall act freely. God is so intimate to the will that He can, so to say, save it from within. But this is different from His control of it in the gift of fortitude. In the intellect a light can be present that is none of our own; but in the will how can there be a force that is not itself of the will?

In other words, we have to reconcile two ideas apparently contradictory — namely, a will which acts yet which does not merit. I am apparently and actually perfectly free, for God does not compel the will unwillingly; yet with all my freedom under the guidance of the gift I cannot acquire merit. That is what we said was the very characteristic of the sevenfold gifts, that they were in their proper operation entirely the work of God.

### GOD NEARER THAN DEAREST FRIEND

To grasp the way in which God thus works, we can describe it only as a sense of firmness imparted to the soul by the perceived presence of God. A comparison, however inadequate, suggests to us in what manner this is effected.

The mere presence of others gives us a courage that alone we should probably not have experienced. A child having to undergo some slight operation, some test of pain, is usually willing to bear it patiently if only its mother will hold its hand. It is of course not that the pain is in this way rendered any the less, but only that a feeling of bravery is imparted by the mere presence of the mother.

So, again, in a still more striking way is it with children in the dark. They are frightened by the loneliness of it; but if another is in the room, though he may not be seen nor heard, without any sensible appreciation of the presence and sustained only by the knowledge of the nearness, the child becomes at once reinforced by a courage that springs entirely from the other's proximity. An invalid will grow querulous when he knows that he is alone. The mere presence of an onlooker will nerve us to bravery without a word being spoken or thing done. In some such sense our soul, by the perceived presence of the Holy Spirit, is encouraged, despite its natural or acquired timidity, to persevere.

Thus it will be seen that the paradox has been reconciled. The perception of the presence has not been our own doing, still less has the nearness of God been through any merit of our own. But the mere indwelling of the Holy Ghost has itself refined the perceptive faculties of the will so that they are strengthened by the divine Friend.

### THE SOUL'S SWEET GUEST

This, then, is the precise purpose of this particular gift — a perception, apart from all the ordinary methods, of the proximity of God to the soul. Not, indeed, as though it meant nothing more than the appreciation that God is everywhere, but rather just one aspect of the appreciation — namely, such an idea of it as will enable the soul to gain courage.

Always the gifts mean, according to the teaching of the Church, such a refinement of spirit as shall enable us to perceive the least passing breath of God. So still has our soul become that the slightest stir ruffles the surface with ripples of a passing presence. So delicate is my soul that instinctively I am conscious of the indwelling of the Spirit of God and nerved in consequence by a corresponding strength which is no result of any determined act of will, but is, as it were, forced on me by the very nature of the case. Neither presence nor strengthening are in any case my doing, nor do I participate in either.

But when I take the further step and proceed to act in consequence of them—when, in virtue of a strength that is not my own, I banish fear and face resolutely the difficulties of the good life—then has the gift led to the virtue, and

out of something that was divine has blossomed something that is human. Surely it will be of the utmost consequence to me to realize this nearness of God, and the courage that its perception will give.

In all my trials none are so hard for me to bear as discouragement and depression. How, then, can I now shirk my duty and the disagreeable necessities imposed on me once I have made use of this divine friend, whose hand is always locked in mine?

### *Gifts that perfect the Emotions*

#### WASH AWAY EACH SINFUL STAIN

Besides the intelligence and the will there are other faculties which, though they are numerous and diverse, can be shortly grouped under the heading of the emotions. Sometimes they are called passions, in the philosophic meaning of the word: that is to say, the movements of the non-rational portion of our being. Sometimes we speak of them as sentiments, especially when we wish to imply that they are to be considered weak and effeminate. Under both categories there will be meditations on them, for they constitute, as will be pointed out, a very considerable force in human life.

Here, however, we have only to consider them as perfected by two gifts of the Holy Ghost. For this purpose it will be necessary to say that these emotions, though various, can be themselves divided into two main headings, such as fall under the general name of love and anger. Under the first would come joy, desire, etc. — namely, all these sentiments that have upon us the effect of drawing us towards something or some person, and giving us expansive feelings towards all humanity. The chief result of these, even physically, is that they widen our sympathies.

Under the heading of anger we would place fear and the other set of feelings, the effects of which are to chill the soul, to contract the emotions, and to produce upon us the feeling of numbness. Even physically we know from experiments of psychologists that the result is to stifle action. The one set shows that our mind has been attracted, the other that it has been repelled.

#### GENTLY SHED THY GRACIOUS RAIN

Piety, then, is said to perfect the attitude of man to God and to things of God, by giving to his relation to his Maker the appearance of friendship. Fear of the Lord, on the other hand, inclines him rather to look upon God in the character of a Judge. The one sanctifies the feeling of love, the other hallows the feeling of fear: and in the life of the soul there is room and need for both. Indeed, it may be said not unjustly that together they produce in the soul that instinct of reverence that is begotten of both.

Love that knows no reverence is not love at all, but passion; and fear that cannot climb to revere the object of our fear is altogether inhuman. So, too, from the opposite standpoint it can hardly be questioned that the chief obstacles that get in the way of our perfect service of God are the two characteristics of hardness and independence.

We do not respond to His appeals; the Passion and the ever-flowing love leave us cold because our hearts are so hardened by the interests and the cares of our daily life, and that deep respect that we owe to the Master of life becomes too often irritation at the way in which His commands cut across our pleasures. We object to the manner in which through His ministers we are told to do something that altogether revolts us — not because it is something very great, but because of its very pettiness. He treats us, we are often inclined to think, as though we were children. Fear of restraint is a natural instinct in men and animals.

#### ON THE DRY AND FRUITLESS SOUL

Reverence, then, suggests that there is needed in us somehow a feeling of tenderness towards God, a softening of the hardened edges of the soul, and, at the same time, a subjection, an avowal of our dependence on Him. The Holy Ghost is, then, to be considered as perfecting by means of these gifts even that borderland of man that lies between the purely reasonable and the purely sensual. The vague stretches of man's consciousness are by the indwelling of the Spirit of God made at once responsive to the slightest communication from it.

Psychology in our own time has made its greatest progress by exploring all the really unknown lands that are in

each of us. The phenomena that are produced by hypnotism and spiritualism are evidence of many other things, which are at present as closed to us as the regions of Tibet. But in this connection they explain to us how whatever lies beyond the influence or rather direction of reason and will must still be brought into subjection to the standard of Christ. We have, therefore, nothing to fear from the researches of professors, for they are but giving us opportunity for extending in our own souls the territory that must be handed back to Him who made it.

This communication and susceptibility to the movement of God is His work, not ours. The virtue must be added to the gift, must follow it as man's contribution (not of course, to the exclusion of God) to the work of his salvation. It is not sufficient for me to feel this presence or to be conscious of the reverence due, but I must further add to it the love and fear of my heart embodied in action — namely, in thought, word, deed.

### *Confirmation*

#### ONCE AND FOR ALL AND ONLY ONCE

I will probably acknowledge that, to a very large extent, I have neglected to make use of this sacrament. Of course, I have received it, and I know well that it cannot be repeated. How, then, can I be held to blame for neglecting that which I have received just the one time that I can possibly receive it? To realize this, let me ask myself why it is that it can be received once only. The answer is naturally that thereby I receive a character or mark on my soul which can never be effaced. But what does all this mean? It means really that I cannot receive Confirmation more than once, for the simple reason that I have no need to repeat it. Once given, it is given for always, because the effects last as long as life lasts.

The grace of Communion may refresh me all my days, but the Presence fades. Absolution removes all my sins from me. They are forgiven for ever. But if unhappily, I fall again into sin, again must I approach this saving sacrament. With Confirmation, on the other hand, the sacramental grace perseveres till the end. Once I have been marked with the grace of Confirmation, I have had set up in my soul a power, a force, that never runs dry or can be drained or even wholly affected by sin. When I do wrong the grace ceases to work, but it does not cease to exist; so that as soon as I have reconciled myself to God, back again comes the flood that Confirmation for good and all established within me.

Hence the value of it does not consist simply in the day of my reception of it, but is to be made use of all the days of my life. The indwelling of the Spirit of God, begun in Baptism, is now made perfect, and the wonderful Sevenfold Gifts of God are put into my charge, so that with me it lies whether I have the benefit they can confer or not.

#### HEAL EACH WOUND AND BEND EACH WILL

But every sacrament has both an outward sign and an inward grace. What are these in Confirmation? First, the external thing, material instrument of God's grace to my soul, is the anointing of my forehead by the Bishop with the consecrated oil. That is the essential outward sign. And the inward grace? Strength. In the East, oil, which is at once a food and a preservative of the skin, is in frequent use among athletes. It is, indeed, the source of the strength of the toilers and is mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures as the symbol of that which it helps to produce. Hence it is the external representation of that inner strength that the soul stands in need of.

Usually Confirmation is administered to children just when they stand upon the threshold of life and are beginning to feel that there are many difficulties that they will have to overcome and endure, just when they are becoming conscious that life grows not easier, but harder. Can I remember that at that age I discovered that not everyone quite held with me about the duties owed to God and all that they entailed? I found that the things I held sacred, and the people that I had been taught to reverence, were now held up to my ridicule; and the things I had been afraid to do, afraid even to think about, were spoken of and done openly before me without shame. Even my own inclinations began suddenly to become more forcible, and unsuspected instincts and hidden forces I did not yet understand began to be felt and to give pleasure.

Thus the full practice of faith, hope, and love also in turn grew increasingly difficult to observe. Then I was confirmed, i.e. these tendencies were henceforth to be counteracted by the indwelling within me, not merely of grace, but of the very Spirit of God. He Himself was to take charge of my soul.



## WARM OUR HEARTS BENUMBED AND CHILL

I have been taught, surely, that the object and effect of this sacrament was to make me strong, that this strengthening of me was to be achieved by the abiding Presence of the Holy Spirit, and that this abiding Presence was to continue for the whole of my lifetime. As the need endures, so must the remedy endure.

This sacrament, therefore, is tremendously alive, nor is it right that I should regard it, as perhaps I have often done in the past, as though it were some childish thing that had to be got over while I am quite young. Do I not find sometimes that people look on it much as they look on the measles as a normal heritage of children? But surely in my fuller age the need of divine strength increases rather than diminishes.

As a child I probably thought that I was only naughty because I was a child, but that when I grew up I supposed that I should find life the easier. Instead, I discovered that I looked back upon my childhood as the innocent time of my life, and looked upon my older years as necessarily years of wrongdoing, though perhaps I clung to the salve of conscience that in youth a man might be a little wild, but in his old age had time to become a saint. Thus it is always yesterday or tomorrow, never today; but Confirmation suddenly reminds me that it is now that God calls, and now that the Holy Ghost makes appeal to me to remember His presence and to make use of it.

Do I, indeed, think of that Presence in my times of stress? In the struggles of temptation do I sufficiently have recourse to that divine Helper given me? Do the Sevenfold Gifts really signify anything practical to me? Let me turn in devotion to the Holy Spirit, recite the hymns to Him, and be conscious always of the resident force pent up in my soul.

## PRAYER TO THE HOLY GHOST

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy Faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

**V.** Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created.

**R.** And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O God, who hast taught the hearts of the Faithful, by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord.

**R.** Amen.

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