

LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD E. MARTIN, O.P., DIRECTOR

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THE PROMISE OF THE ASSUMPTION

In an earlier reflection on the Assumption we observed that the event of the Assumption formed a part of the Church's earliest belief about the mother of God. However, the liturgical celebration did not come along until the end of the Fourth Century.

One reason the Church was slow to establish a liturgical feast was the invisibility that surrounded the Assumption. The early Church revered the bodies of martyrs, and the saints' relics gave rise to churches where the faithful could gather in the saints' presence. No community ever claimed to possess the body of God's Mother. And, unlike her Son's very public Ascension, Mary's Assumption appears to have been a quiet, unheralded event.

We would expect nothing less of Christ's Mother. The gospel mentions Mary's presence at every important event in the life of Jesus, but hers is most often a silent witness that invites us to place ourselves in her place, and to observe what she observes. Her Assumption, likewise, invites us to remember that we, too, look forward to a life with God that will reward our bodies as well as our souls. Our physical lives in the 21st Century may not allow us to be the quiet witness Mary was, but we are all called to cultivate her inner silence, and to find a place where we can be alone with God and listen to God's Spirit.

None of Mary's liturgical celebrations is unimportant, but the Assumption is the reward to crown all that went before, so August 15 recalls the triumph of Our Lady's humanity, and reminds us what heroism God has a right to expect from us. The Church invites us to embrace the example Mary holds up for our imitation, but we must not sentimentalize her. The Assumption may have allowed Mary to smile at her uncertainty in the face of the angel's message at the Annunciation, or her anxiety at finding herself and her family poor refugees on the Flight into Egypt, but her fear and pain were no less real at the time.

God's gift to Mary is no different than the gift of faith we receive at our Baptism. This gift does not turn us into blind optimists, but it offers us the realistic consolation



Silhouette by Sr. Jean Dorcy, O.P.

The Assumption of Mary

that those who are willing to follow Christ in His example of suffering may hope to share His glory. If these words seem mock us in times of trial and distress, these are the moments to think of Mary, and how she has shared all our confusion and pain.

In his Apostolic Letter on the Rosary, Pope John Paul II painted a remarkable – and remarkably touching – picture of Mary.

...Mary's gaze, ever filled with adoration and wonder, would never leave [Jesus],” the Pontiff proclaimed. “At times it would be a questioning look...at other times a look of sorrow...on the morning of Easter hers would be a gaze radiant with the joy of the Resurrection....

From her place of eminence in the Communion of Saints, Mary now looks on us with the same loving gaze she turned upon Our Savior. A classic hymn says,

*Virgin-born, we bow before Thee
Blessed was the womb that bore Thee...
Blessed was the mother's eye
That watched thy slumb'ring infancy.*

We may be safely removed from the smells and dirt of the stable at Bethlehem, but none of us will outgrow the need for someone to watch over our slumbers, whether they
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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

THE APOSTLES' CREED, PART VII

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

AN ESSENTIAL TRUTH

In reflecting on what the Creed teaches us about the Holy Spirit we must consider the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as they are related to one another in the Holy Trinity. The new Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us the Mystery of the most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life... the mystery of God in Himself. It is therefore the source of all other mysteries... the most fundamental... teaching in the *"hierarchy of the truths of faith...."*

MYSTERY STORIES VS. MYSTERIES OF FAITH

In crime shows and detective novels mysteries are solved with a combination of persistence, logic and good luck; in the real life of Christians mysteries are only approached through experience and penetrated by love. Mystery stories can become dull after awhile, but the mysteries of our faith cannot be understood fully so we can never tire of them.

Although — or perhaps because — they eternally puzzle us, the mysteries of our faith remain capable of forever refreshing and nourishing us. In the Book of Proverbs, God's Wisdom speaks of *"delight"* and *"rejoicing"* among the human race (Prov. 8.31), which suggests that God also wants to enchant us, and to beguile us, in pleasant ways, to discern His will.

A SPIRIT OF LOVE

The Word of God is God's Son, just as human words are the concepts that exist in our intellect. God's love is the Holy Spirit, and the Scriptures are filled with references to the love the Spirit reveals. St. Paul's words, *"the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given to us"* (Rom. 5.5), are perhaps the most famous, but the thought behind them is by no means unique.

A RESPONSE TO ERROR

From its earliest days the Church has developed its theology to respond to errors or attacks on its beliefs. When the Church Fathers gathered at Nicea, in 325, they faced a number of false opinions about God's Spirit, including claims that the Holy Spirit is inferior to the Father and Son, or that the Spirit was created.

In these reflections we have been considering the Apostles' Creed, but when we come to the Holy Spirit we will profit from considering five points made by the Nicene Creed that clarify the Church's authentic teaching.

THE SPIRIT IS LORD

In the Creed we call the Holy Spirit "the Lord." This is to distinguish the Holy Spirit from the spirits God has created. We are surrounded by these spirits, most notably the angels. However, these spirits are created by the Father to be ministers of His will. The Holy Spirit is uncreated, eternal, and equal in all things to the Father and The Son. Like the Father and Son, then, the Spirit is appropriately called Lord.

THE GIVER OF LIFE

The Creed also names the Spirit *"the giver of life."* The presence of the human soul gives life to our human bodies. Similarly, union with God gives life to the soul. In the gospel Jesus tells us, *"it is the Spirit that gives life"* (Jn. 6.64), so we have Our Savior's words to establish this title for the Holy Spirit. But to understand these words we must consider that the Spirit unites us to the Father and the Son in a relation of love. This love is the very life of God, so the Spirit brings us to life by sharing God's love with us.

PROCEEDING FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON

To acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the love of the Father and the Son reinforces Catholic belief that the Spirit shares equally in the life of the Trinity. Our profession of faith also reinforces our belief that the Spirit is — like the Father and the Son — eternal and uncreated.

WORSHIPPED WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

In St. John's gospel, Jesus tells the crowd, *"true [worshippers] shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth"* (Jn. 4:23). To approach the Father means approaching Him in the love revealed by the Spirit. To offer the Spirit the same honor we offer the Father and the Son is nothing more than mere gratitude for the Spirit's uniting us in love with the other persons of the Trinity.

SPOKEN THROUGH THE PROPHETS

The Old Testament is filled with references to God's Spirit. From the psalm which acknowledges, *"when you send forth your spirit they [humanity] are created"* (Ps. 100.30), to the prophet Ezekiel, who hears God say to the House of Israel, *"...I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live...."* (Ez. 37.14), the Church has experienced the Spirit as an active, life-giving force.

Nevertheless, some members of the early Church wished to make a complete break with the tradition

that had gone before. They denied the Father's hand in the history of the Old Testament, and claimed that an evil spirit had prompted the words of Moses and the prophets, or that those who claimed to speak under the Spirit's influence were wicked or insane.

To profess our belief in the Spirit's speaking through the great figures of the Old Testament not only expresses our belief in the unity of the persons of the Trinity, but reinforces our belief in the Spirit's eternal presence.

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT: FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Early Church writers distinguished between "theology," which they described as the life of God in itself, and "economy," which are the works that reveal God's life to us. In the beginning God brought all things into existence because His love could not be anything but creative.

Creation shows us God's power and inventiveness, and reveals that only the one who creates something is capable of repairing it if it has been damaged. If we sin we cannot heal ourselves, but must turn to our Creator. Because God created us through His Spirit of love, the same love reconciles us to the Father. When Jesus tells the crowd that a sinful woman has been forgiven "*because she hath loved much*" (Lk. 7.47), or when St. Peter writes that "*Charity covers a multitude of sins*" (1 Pt. 4.8), they invite us to rely on the healing power of the love that gives us life.

ENLIGHTENMENT

At the Last Supper Jesus told the disciples the Father would send the Spirit to "*teach... you all things and... bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I have said to you*" (Jn. 14.23). The Holy Spirit is not only the source of God's love, but the means by which we learn, understand, reflect and recall the things the Father has done for our well-being.

FIDELITY TO THE COMMANDMENTS

We earlier mentioned Ezekiel as one of the prophets who spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In one of the most vivid pictures God draws in the Old Testament He promises Ezekiel,

I will give you a new heart, and... a new spirit... I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh... I will cause you to walk in my commandments and to keep my judgments (Ez. 36.26, 27).

These words remind us that the Spirit is not just the object of our worship, but the very principle of our moral identity as Christians. We have been created in God's image, which means we have been created to love. This means that the more we embrace the mystery of the Trinity the more we can understand about ourselves, and the more deeply we examine the works of God the more clearly we can discern the model for our behavior. God's Spirit is always present to remind us of the image

we bear within us, and the call to holiness we have received as a result of that image.

HOPE

St. Paul calls the Holy Spirit "*the pledge of our inheritance*" (Eph. 1.13) and tells us that through the Spirit we have the confidence to call God our Father (Gal. 4.6). True love will not promise what it cannot give, so our ability to turn to God in prayer is a sign of the Spirit at work in our lives, enabling us to experience God's love now, and to look forward to enjoying it even more fully in God's kingdom.

COUNSEL

Each day we receive a new reminder that we are not perfect. Our bodies fail to behave as we would like, and our emotions are clouded by doubt and fear. Temptation confuses us and makes not only wonder what God wants us to do and to question whether doing God's will is worthwhile.

The catechism of our youth taught us God created us to "*know, love, and serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him*" In the next. God did not create us to be unhappy, so the Spirit is always present to sooth our doubts, and to lead us along the paths that will take us to God. "*He that hath an ear,*" the Spirit tells St. John in the book of Revelation, "*let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches*" (Rev. 2.17).

APPROACHING THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY

An important principle in our faith that tells us if we want to know what the Church believes we need only look at how the Church prays. So although we can never understand the mystery of the Trinity completely, examining how we pray will tell us quite a bit about it.

If we consider of any of the prayers we say during the Mass, especially the Eucharistic Prayer itself, we discover that in each of them we address the Father through the Son, in the Spirit. The structure of our prayer expresses at once our belief that the persons of the Trinity are related but distinct. The structure of our prayer also reminds us that the Father is the source of everything that is and everything we can want, that these gifts are revealed and given us through the Son, and that the Spirit is the bond that unites us to God in love — and to one another in prayer.

LIVING THE MYSTERY

These theological realities are not something we need to spend time thinking about because we live them every day. We encounter Jesus in the Scripture and the sacraments. The action of the Spirit allows us to reflect on our lives in Christ, and this directs our lives up and out — up toward the Father and, through him, out toward another.

LIVING GOD'S REVELATION

God reveals himself to us through his actions; we come to love him because of the things he does for us,

and the more we love him the better we understand the meaning of his actions, and the more we want to know Him better

THE MODESTY OF THE TRINITY

At the Last Supper Jesus promised His disciples the Spirit who will lead them to all truth.

He will not speak on his own, but will speak only what he hears... All that the Father has belongs to me. That is why I have said that what he will announce to you he will have from me (Jn. 15. 12-16).

There is a tremendous modesty in Jesus' words today, a frank acknowledgement of His power, and a humble acknowledgement not only that this power is something He has received from another, but that He will allow still another the pleasure of sharing that power with us.

THE TRINITY AND PENTECOST

The gift of God's Spirit unites us to the Persons of the Trinity, and the Spirit's on-going presence keeps us united with the great events of our salvation. At Pentecost God's Spirit blessed our lips and opened our ears. Our theology teaches us that gifts are never given just to enrich the individual who receives them: they must be shared for the common good and the building up of God's kingdom.

When we consider the Trinity the Spirit reminds us that everything we are and everything we have is God's gift. Our task as Christians is to share the gift exactly as we have received it, and to disappear behind the gift so that whatever we say and whatever we do will reveal the hand and the voice of God. ■

THE PROMISE *(continued from page 1)*

are peaceful or wracked with worry and pain. God's Mother has shared our joy and our suffering, and her Assumption is the pledge of an eternity of peace that will transform our pain. (Note: readers who wish to read Pope John Paul II's letter on the Rosary in its entirety, may order a copy from the Rosary Center for \$2.50, plus postage.)

FR. PAUL DUFFNER – NINETY-TWO YEARS – YOUNG

Fr. Paul Duffner, who directed the Rosary Center for more than two decades, has celebrated another birthday in Our Lady's service. Fr. Duffner's religious brothers remain inspired by his example, and impressed with his dedication to a ministry that he pioneered. "The man is amazing," says Fr. Duffner's religious superior. "Everyone else in the house takes at least one pill a day; Fr. Duffner takes nothing more than a vitamin – with the lunch he shares each day with Rosary Center workers!"

Fr. Duffner is a daily presence at the Rosary Center, where he performs many small, but necessary services. For example, Fr. Duffner assembles the packets of many of the Rosary Center's leaflets, and fastened with rubber bands. "It's a thankless task," says Fr. Reginald, who succeeded Fr Duffner as Director of the Center three

years ago, "but Fr. Duffner does it with a ready heart. He's discovered how much the different leaflets weigh, so he makes piles of them on the postal scale. Then come the rubber bands!" ■

MEMORIAL FUND PASSES MILESTONE

Thanks to the generosity of Rosary Center benefactors, the Center's Memorial Education Fund has grown beyond \$250,000.00, and the Center's Director, Fr. Reginald Martin, O.P., is both delighted and grateful. He is not, however, surprised. "I have had the chance to work with our friends for many years," he says, "and I have never known them not to respond to a good cause." Does he think the Education Fund one of these causes? "It is essential to the future of the Rosary Center and its mission! The Dominican students we train today are the brothers and priests who will carry the message of the Rosary – not to mention the Light and Life bulletin – around the world."

Fr. Reginald established the Memorial Fund about two years ago. "I can't recall how large the initial gift was," he smiles, "I think it was two or three thousand dollars. But it seemed too large to put into the operating fund. People don't make gifts like that so that we can pay the light bill!" One gift led to another, and a major bequest – "from a friend who left us her house," Fr. Reginald adds – has brought the Fund to its present worth.

Fr. Reginald continues, "The Memorial Education Fund is a permanent tribute to the friends of the Rosary Center. The body of the fund remains intact, and we use the fund's earnings to help underwrite the education of Dominican students." What does he hope for now that the Fund has reached Fr. Reginald's first goal, of a quarter-million dollars? "I look forward to the Fund's growing to half a million. At some point I would like the Fund to generate income sufficient to pay a student's expenses for a year." And then? Fr. Reginald laughs, "God has blessed us with many fine young men – we just ordained four of them. I'd like to pay tuition for them all!" ■

POSTAL PALS MEET CHALLENGE OF NEW RATES

"I've learned not to ask, 'what next?'" says Fr. Reginald. "I was astounded when our volunteers came home from a meeting at the Post Office and told me that we must now pay \$37.00 to mail a box of rosaries overseas. And then I realized that our Postal Pals would rise to this challenge as they have to so many others." What challenges? Fr. Reginald says, "Until I arrived here three years ago, I had no idea you could send a letter – let alone a rosary – to Burma. And yet we do. We even send them to the Arab Emirates. The Postal Pal ministry has taught me a great deal about world geography, and even more about the generosity of the human heart."

Life is seldom dull around the Rosary Center, but the Center's benefactors would have been very impressed with the quiet efficiency and dedicated energy with which the Center's workers and volunteers determined to take advantage of every moment of the old postal rates. "I told someone I doubted we had a hundred rosaries on

hand,” said Fr. Reginald after the new rates went into effect, “but the Rosary-makers have been busy, and our Postal Pals have not been far behind.”

NEW MEDIA PROVE SUCCESSFUL

In the last issue of Light and Life we shared the good news of the Rosary Center’s acquiring Albertus Magnus Media, a ministry of the Western Dominican Province that produces and distributes a large number of CDs on various theological and spiritual topics. We offered a complete list of these CDs in our last mailing (they are also available online, at WWW.Rosary-Center.Org), and the response was very, very heartening. The Rosary Center looks forward to producing its first CDs this summer, when two noted Dominican theologians will visit the Center. The Center’s primary focus will remain devotion to the Rosary and the Mother of God, but our benefactors’ generosity has proven an interest in placing these topics within the larger context of the Catholic Church’s doctrinal teaching.