

The sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit according to St John Chrysostom*

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1. Prolegomena

To get acquainted with the immense literary output of John Chrysostom requires a great deal of time, but is worth-while. The richness of the subject matter and the spontaneous rhetoric charm the reader; the piety and spiritual awakening he provokes do not differ from the sentiments evoked in his contemporaries by his »golden tongue«. He delights in commenting on the great mystery of divine economy: God's plan for the salvation of his royal creature, man. He deals at length with the work of the third person of the Trinity in the world, as the source of sanctification, the »oikonomos«, within the body of Christ that is the Church. »The Holy Spirit pours out all gifts; it summons up prophecies, perfects priests; it has taught wisdom to the unlettered, sent forth fishermen as theologians; it builds up the whole of the institution that is the Church«¹.

The Holy Spirit's power of sanctification was the hinge on which turned God's loving communion with the first man and the first woman. When original sin abolished this relationship, the Holy Spirit continued its work, preparing the re-approachment of man to God through shadowy apparitions in the Old Testament and the pre-Christian world, and through an authentic »indwelling« (*ἐμπολίτευσις*) in the faithful of Christ's Church².

This gift »surpassing all intelligence« of God's loving kindness towards those who have »put on Christ«, makes them »useful vessels« (*εὐχρηστα σκεύη*) of the Word, »children of light« (*φωτόμορφα τέκνα*), »participators in the divine nature« (*κοινωνοὺς θείας φύσεως*).

2. The Holy Spirit and creation

The mystery, »hidden in the rock of ages«, of divine economy was brought to pass with the lively entry into the world of the persons of the Trinity. »Father, Son and Holy Spirit wrought salvation for us« (*Διενείματο τὴν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν οἰκονομίαν*) says John

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¹ Hymn of the Feast of Pentecost (Idiomêlon).

² John Chrysostom, Sermon on the Nativity of Jesus Christ: PG 56, 363; see also: G. Eméreau, *Mélanges de Philosophie byzantine*, EOr (1921) 295—300 (Christmas Sermon); P. Rado, *Die Ps. Chrysostomische Homilie on the Nativity of Christ*, ZKTh 56 (1932) 82—83; R. V. Schoder, *St. Chrysostom and the date of Christ's Nativity*, ThStKr (1942) 140—144; the text of the sermon affirms: »Δεύτερον ναὶν ἑαυτῷ κατασκευάσας ὁ Θεὸς ζῶντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου δι' ἑαυτοῦ τὴν οἰκογένειαν ὠφέλησεν«.

Chrysostom³. Excluding the isolated action of each divine Person, he stresses, characteristically, that »where one hypostasis of the trinity is present, the whole Trinity is present; for being undivided, it is most perfectly united«⁴.

The action of the Holy Spirit in the world is gradual and progressive. After the bond of love between God and the first man and woman was mortally loosened — that love in the Holy Spirit —, man was deprived of the Spirit's presence, because God »withdraws the grace of the Spirit because he is angry with us« (*ἀναστέλλει τοῦ πνεύματος τὴν χάριν, ἐπειδὴν ἡμῖν ὀργίζεται*)⁵.

The universality, in time and space, that is lived by the eucharistic mystery, permits St John Chrysostom to accept the unifying action of the Holy Spirit even in the world of the Gentiles and pagans. »What is the one body? It is the faithful everywhere in the oecumene, in the past, present and future being. Likewise the just living before Christ's appearance are one body« (*τί δ' ἔστιν ἓν σῶμα; οἱ πανταχοῦ τῆς οἰκουμένης πιστοὶ καὶ ὄντες καὶ γενόμενοι καὶ ἐσόμενοι. Πάλι καὶ οἱ πρὸ τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παρουσίας ἓν σῶμα εἰσὶ*)⁶.

During the long night of man's apostasy from God, the latter's loving providence prepared through the faint or strengthened action of the Spirit salvation in the person of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament the mystery of salvation is prefigured, especially the mystery of the Eucharist⁷, the children of Israel are led by prophetic words⁸ or by legalistic commandments, using both miraculous and worshipful means.

Moreover, there are certain announcements by God of the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit. »And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh« (Joel 2:28). The Holy Spirit, which appeared only partially and sporadically to suggest the mystery of Economy, was overtly proclaimed by the archangel as the »power of the Almighty« that would overshadow the Virgin Mary and cause here to conceive the Saviour of Israel.

During His life on earth, the Lord gives His disciples exceptional power to work miracles through the authority and guidance of the Holy Spirit, but it was only a temporary gift: »for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified« (John 7:39). The full outpouring of the Spirit, perfecting and perceivable even with the senses, the »pouring out on all flesh« according to the prophecy of Joel, took place in the world on the day of Pentecost — the Church's birthday.

³ Sermon on the Pentecost: PG 50, 456.

⁴ Homely to the Romans 13:8: PG 60, 519; see also: A. Mean, *Etude des homélies que Jean Chrysostome a prononcées sur le premier chapitre de l'Épître aux Romains*, Neuchâtel 1930; J. a Jesu Macias, *La doctrina de la justificación en el comentario de S. Juan Crisostomus*, Diss. Greg. Rome 1951.

⁵ Sermon on the Pentecost: PG 50, 457.

⁶ Hom. on the Gospel of St John, 3:2; PG 59, 361; cf. Hom. 31, 2, PG 59, 284; Hom. against the Jews 6,4: PG 48, 99.

⁷ Sermon on the Nativity of Jesus Christ 35: PG 53, 328: The offering of bread and wine of Melchisedek to Abraham is interpreted by St John Chrysostom as an act guided by the Holy Spirit.

⁸ Cf. 2 Petr 1:21: »For the prophecy came not in old time by will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.«

3. Pentecost as the mystery of the divine revelation

Man's disobedience with regard to God was not just a legal affair, but brought about an ontological alteration in human nature. Humankind became subordinate to death and decay, from which only one power could save him: »I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord, yeah, I will remember thy wonders of old« (Ps 77:11) (*ἡ ἀλλοίωσις τοῦ Ὑψίστου*).

The grace given by God reverses the process of decay and transforms the rottenness of human nature and of the world. For this reason Christ »having come and fulfilled all the conditions of economy on our behalf«⁹, purified with His pure blood the churchgoer »from the demons«. Chrysostom most aptly remarks: »Christ having come to her den, and found her unclean, squalid, naked, soiled with blood, washed her, anointed her, fed her, garbed her ... and He is bringing her to the heavenly kingdom«¹⁰.

However, this purification by Christ and the blessings which flow from it are treasured up in strength in the mystic body of Christ, the Church, and are bestowed on every worshipper only by the Holy Spirit¹¹, which assembles the church organism into a whole. »Just as«, he says, »there is a spirit binding all organs into one body and making a whole of different members, so it is here: to this end the Spirit was given, in order to unite, by various means, divided units«¹².

The day of Pentecost is the day of the revelation of the Holy Spirit in the world, and the dawn of the »new creation« of humankind: »Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come« (2 Cor 5:17)¹³. The Holy Spirit renders participatory the blessings of the renewal effected by Christ. It is offered as a boundless source of life. »This source is shared out to every soul among the faithful, yet it is not diminished; it is shared, yet not spent; it is fragmented but not lessened. To all it is given whole, and to each one whole«¹⁴. It acts as a permanent Pentecost within the Church, which is capable of reforming, transforming and transfiguring the whole of creation. »Not only will it extend to everywhere in the universe, but also everywhere in time«¹⁵.

The Lord's disciples, after the promise of the coming of the Paraclete, once they were filled with the Holy Spirit, poured forth into the world. They acted as organs of the Spirit, which preceded them and moved the souls of the faithless to piety: For they were not

⁹ Prayer of the Anaphora in St John Chrysostom's Divine Liturgy.

¹⁰ Cf. Hom. on the Psalms 5,2: PG 55, 63: »Ἐλθὼν (ὁ Χριστὸς) εἰς τὸ κατώγιον αὐτῆς (Ἐκκλησίας) καὶ εὐρὼν ρυπῶσαν, αἰχμῶσαν, γυμνήν, περφυμένην αἵματι ἔλουσεν, ἤλειψεν, ἔθραψεν, ἐνέδυσεν ἱμάτιον, οἷον εὐρεθῆναι ἕτερον οὐκ ἔνι. Αὐτὸς αὐτῇ γενόμενος περιβολή, καὶ λαβὼν αὐτὴν ἀναγάγει πρὸς τὴν οὐρανίαν βασιλείαν«.

¹¹ Cf. John Karmiris, The Ecclesiology of the Three Hierarchs, Athens 1962 (in Greek).

¹² Cf. Hom. on the Epistle to the Ephesians 9, 3: PG 35, 409.

¹³ Cf. Hymn of the Matins of Sunday, Ton A': »Ἄγιε Πνεύματι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις καινουργεῖ παλινδρομοῦσα εἰς τὸ πρῶτον ...«.

¹⁴ Cf. Hom. on the Acts of the Apostles 3, 72: PG 60, 13—384.

¹⁵ Hom. on the Psalms 44, 13: PG 55, 203; see also J. Quasten, The Conflict of Early Christianity with the Jewish Temple Worship, *Theological Studies* 2 (1941) 481—487.

preceded by a crier, but by the grace of the Spirit, and its manifestation by miracles, cried out with a voice more resonant than any trumpet¹⁶.

They confirmed the true faith not only with miracles, but by proclaiming the Good News of spiritual rebirth and the forgiveness of sins. « They took with them fire to burn up the sins of the world and wipe out all transgressions. Just as fire falling on thorns will wipe them out recklessly, so the grace of the spirit swamped the sins of humankind¹⁷.

The apostolic period is characterised by an amazing activity on the part of the Holy Spirit. In the assemblies of Christians the presence of the Spirit is manifested by a diversity of gifts (1 Cor 12:4–11). The »powers« (*δυνάμεις*), »operations« (*ἐνεργήματα*) or »gifts« (*χαρίσματα*) point to a situation rife with the various manifestations of the Spirit. With the passing of time, these give way to asceticism, theological writings, etc.

The Holy Spirit aims at the sanctification of the whole man, embracing all his psychosomatic functions and capabilities. It takes hold of the mind, dispersed and full of illusions and fictions, and leads it to the giddy heights of Christian theology. »By the Spirit, to one there was given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge« (*Ἦ μὲν γὰρ δίδοται διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος λόγος σοφίας, ἄλλω δὲ λόγος γνώσεως*)¹⁸.

True wisdom and true knowledge stem from the revelatory power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is organised and governed by individuals singled out in the Christian community by the spirit of God. »Were the Holy Spirit not present, there would not have been pastors and teachers in the church« (*Εἰ μὴ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἦν, ποιμένες καὶ διδάσκαλοι ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ οὐκ ἦσαν*)¹⁹.

These Spirit-filled men teach their »rational flocks« of the Church militant and formulate the truths of the faith in doctrinal canons. »Through the Holy Spirit, the wealth of divine knowledge is a wealth of contemplation and wisdom. Through it, the Word reveals all the doctrines of our fathers...«²⁰ says the hymn. For, as »the Son and the Holy Spirit alone have thorough and perfect knowledge of him (the Father)²¹, the holy fathers in their defence against heresies need the knowledge that comes from above. »It is becoming that we should have the flame of the Spirit, not only in order to draw out a sword but to devour by fire that wicked root (*τῶν ἀνομιῶν*)²². The struggles against heresies, going as far as martyrdom, are the object of hymnal compositions in the field of pure worship²³.

¹⁶ Hom. on the Acts of the Apostles, 3: PG 60, 80.

¹⁷ Sermon on the Pentecost A.: PG 50, 465A.

¹⁸ Ibid., 4003A.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hymn from the Orthodox hymnography, the third antiphonon, Ton D'.

²¹ Hom. on the Incomprehensible Nature of God, 4: PG 48, 477.

²² Ibid., 463 A.

²³ Hymn of doxastikon of the Vespers of the Sunday of the Holy Fathers: »Τὰς μουσικὰς σήμερον τοῦ Πνεύματος σάλπιγγας, τοὺς θεοφόρους Πατέρας ἀνευφημήσωμεν τοὺς μελωδήσαντας ἐν μέσῳ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μέλος ἐναρμόνιον θεολογίας.«

4. The grace given in the sacraments by the Holy Spirit

In the »holy mysteries«, the sacraments, the Spirit has a central place. In them, we pray to the Father to send the grace of the Holy Spirit through the Son. We ask for the visible giving of the invisible divine grace. (*Εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἀσώματος ἥς γυνὰ ἄν αὐτά σοι τὰ ἀσώματα δῶρα, ἐπειδὴ δὲ συμπλέκεται ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν αἰσθητοῖς τὰ νοητά τοι παραδίδωσι*)²⁴.

The sacramental act, by which one is incorporated into the mystical body of the Church of Christ, is Holy Baptism. During the ceremony, »through the words of the priest and through his hand, the Holy Spirit is called down and in exchange removes completely the stain of sin and taking of the old garment of sin and putting on the royal robe«²⁵. In this introductory sacrament to the new creation in Christ, wherein the power of sin is utterly broken and »justice, sanctification and adoption« are conferred, the holy Father recognises a whole ladder of spiritual ascent. »Those who, before yesterday, were captives, are now free men and citizens of the Church; those who were formerly in the same of sin are now given the high of speech and justice. Not only are they free, but also holy ... and just ... and sons ... and inheritors ... and brethren of Christ ... and co-inheritors ... and members ... and temples ... and organs of the Spirit«²⁷. And if all who arise from baptism take also of the Lord's table, then »like Christ himself, dressed thus in robes of healing like earthly angels everywhere apparent and reflecting the rays of the sun«²⁸. The need for this sacrament contributed to the institution of infant baptism. »At any rate, for this reason we baptize even children, though they have no sins, so that they may acquire sanctification, justice, filial adoption, inheritance, brotherhood, and become members of Christ and the abode of the Spirit« (*τὸ κατοικητήριον γενέσθαι τοῦ Πνεύματος*)²⁹.

This sacrament is accompanied by the sacrament of Chrismation (confirmation), in which the bestowal of the Holy Spirit is more evident: »it prepares to anoint the whole body by that spiritual oil, so that all the members may be protected through the anointing and become unconquerable, impervious to the arrows shot by the adversary«³⁰. The characteristic phrase pronounced during the chrismation of the neophyte certifies the presence of the Holy Spirit: »The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, Amen.«

Participation in the sacraments is a common right of the faithful, but their consecration belongs to a particular class of believers appointed by the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of Holy Order. »Those dwelling on earth ... were permitted to given celestial mat-

²⁴ Hom. on the Gospel of St Matthew, 82; see also A. Vleyn, La doctrine morale de S. Jean Chrysostome dans le commentaire sur S. Matthieu et ses affinités avec la diatribe, *Revue Universit. Ottawa* 27 (1975) 5—25; 99—140.

²⁵ Baptismal Catechese 2, 25, *Sources Chrétiennes* (SC) 50 (1957), p. 147.

²⁶ Baptismal Catechese 3, 6, SC 50 (1947), p. 154.

²⁷ Ibid., 3, 5, p. 153.

²⁸ Ibid., 2, 27, p. 149.

²⁹ Ibid., 3, 6, p. 154.

³⁰ Ibid., 2, 24, p. 147.

ters and received an authority given by God to neither angels nor archangels³¹. St Chrysostom considers the rank of priesthood to be the highest honour and responsibility; with godly wisdom he deals with the subject at length in his sermons. All of those who have received a calling to this service and irrigate the Church with the springs of sanctification, have received this rank through no other spiritual hypostasis than the Holy Spirit. »The (sacrament of) priesthood is celebrated on earth, but has the rank of the heavenly legions. For neither men, nor angels, nor archangels, nor any other created power, but the Paraclete himself ordered this celebration and the angels take care of His diakonia³². This service (diakonia) is supernatural and fearful, so that without the help of God they were in danger of being annihilated: »You do not know that human soul never ever held that fire of sacrifice without risk of all being utterly annihilated, were it not for the great help given by the grace of God³³. It is necessary for the celebrant to be in a state of spiritual conditioning and leading a holy life, for »it was not fire he was bringing down, but the Holy Spirit« (ἔστηκε οὐ πῦρ καταφέρων ἀλλὰ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον)³⁴.

Knowing the spiritual benefit obtainable from the sacraments, John Chrysostom not only examines them in detail in his pastoral sermons, but moves »every tongue« in order to bring his flock to the sources of sanctification. At the point where he expounds on the saving power of the sacrament of Penance (confession), he concludes with a paternal plea: »For this reason I entreat, pray and beseech you. Confess (your sins) continually to God³⁵. »The faithful owe the possibility of being rid of their sins to the power of binding and loosing given by Christ to the Apostles. Moreover, the bishop is the steward (oikonomos) of penitence³⁶.

Also to another realm of the community life of the faithful, Chrysostom accords a sacramental character. Marriage is »a little church« (μικρὰ Ἐκκλησία)³⁷. But it is true that the »mystery of marriage is great«. And John Chrysostom uses the beautiful picture of the relationship between the young girl and her parents during the wedding. »And all the pain that the parents suffered for their daughter will not be forgotten particularly when she will bear a child...³⁸. In this way he justifies the words of St Paul: »This mystery is great« (Eph 5:32). Again, since the nuptial union is based on love, of unapproachable nature and dimensions, marriage is called the »sacrament of love³⁹, celebrated as well under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If each of these sacraments requires the presence and renewing action of the Holy Spirit, it is in the Holy Eucharist that the fullest degree of sanctification is reached, that is, the unbreakable incorporation of the communicants with the divino-human body of

³¹ *St John Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, 3: PG 47, 383 B—C.*

³² *Ibid.*, 682 B.

³³ *Ibid.*, 683 A.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Hom. on the Incomprehensible Nature of God: PG 48, 790 C.*

³⁶ *Sermon on the Cross and Brigand, 2: PG 49, 417 B.*

³⁷ *Hom. on the Epistle to the Ephesians: PG 62, 143.*

³⁸ *Baptismal Catechese 1, 12, SC 50 (1957), op.cit., p. 114.*

³⁹ *Cf. Hom. on Marriage 3: PG 51, 230; cf. SC 50 (1957), p. 114, note 1.*

Christ. With the descent of the Holy Spirit, every worldly thing becomes Spirit-filled and is transformed into a vessel of worship⁴⁰. On this great sacrament John Chrysostom has left a vast number of passages and employed the strongest possible terms to give an idea of the union of Our Lord with humankind⁴¹.

The person »celebrating« (»perfecting«) this sacrament is, again, the Holy Spirit. »The grace of the Spirit being present and overshadowing performs the whole mystic sacrifice«⁴². And on the »upper room set for the feast« of Maundy Thursday, he writes: »Then, the table was not of silver nor the chalice of gold, from which Christ gave his disciples his blood, but all was honourable and fearful, since it was filled with the Spirit«⁴³. In the Divine Liturgy composed by John Chrysostom himself, we read the following supplication after the consecration: »That our God who loves mankind may accept them (the holy gifts) on his holy and heavenly altar as an offering of spiritual fragrance and may send down upon us his divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.« The faithful have the duty to unite first among themselves in the name of Christ's love and then to approach the redoubtable altar of the Lord's Supper⁴⁴. This is the altar of our soul, of the bond of our intelligence, the hope, the salvation, the light and life⁴⁵.

After their awe-inspiring entanglement with Christ in the Eucharist, they become »of one body with him and co-inheritors«⁴⁶. With the »Lord's blood the soul is washed clean, embellished and kindled« and the mind becomes »brighter than fire«, while the soul becomes »more lustrous than gold«⁴⁷. After holy communion, we and Christ »are one« (ἓν ἐσμέν)⁴⁸; we ourselves become, by grace, divino-human. When we unite with Christ »like the body with the head«⁴⁹, we unite in an uninterrupted brotherly fashion with all the community which has been sanctified in the Holy Spirit. Our neighbour »is your brother; he has been freed from the same pangs as you; he has been called to the same table«⁵⁰. With all these sacramental acts, the people of God having become Spirit-bearing (pneumatophoros, christophoros); proceeding upwards towards the Father, it becomes a dwelling-place of the Holy Trinity: »For it is not with gold or silver, but with the grace of the Spirit that it shines bright and, instead of the tabernacle and the Cherubim, has grounded in it Christ, the Father himself and the Paraclete«⁵¹.

⁴⁰ Cf. G. Limouris, *The liturgical symbolism in an incorporation with the Eucharistic Christ*, Strasbourg 1983, pp. 382–453.

⁴¹ Hom. on the Epistle to 1 Tim 15:4: PG 62, 566: »Οὐχ ἀπλῶς μὶνυμας σοι ἀλλὰ συμπλέκομαι, τρώγομαι, λεπτύνομαι κατὰ μικρόν ... ἐγὼ δὲ συννοαίνομαι σοι«.

⁴² Sermon on the Pentecost 1: PG 50, 463 C.

⁴³ Hom. on the Gospel of St. Matthew 50, 3: PG 58, 504.

⁴⁴ Hom. on Juda's Treason: PG 49, 382.

⁴⁵ Hom. on First Epistle to the Corinthians 24, 5: PG 51, 205: »Αὕτη γὰρ ἡ τράπεζα τῆς ψυχῆς ἡμῶν τὰ νεῦρα, τῆς διανοίας ὁ σύνδεσμος, τῆς παρρησίας ἡ ὑπόθεσις, ἡ ἐλπίς, ἡ σωτηρία, τὸ φῶς, ἡ ζωή«.

⁴⁶ Hom. on Romans 10, 2: PG 60, 477.

⁴⁷ Hom. on the Epistle to the Hebrews 7,3: PG 63, 58.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Hom. on Romans 10, 2: PG 60, 477.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 8, 465–466.

⁵¹ Hom. on God for the fallen 1: PG 47, 277–8.

The voluntary partaking of the sacraments of Baptism, Penance and Eucharist permits divine grace to act beneficially in the worshipper. »For the pervading grace of God transformed the souls without to change the essence (ousia), but it had transformed only the *intention* (will)« (*προαίρεσιν*)⁵². And just as the Son and the Holy Spirit assisted in the first creation of man, they work together now in the same way with the Father for the rebirth »of man, fallen and corrupted in his flesh«; »to all who received him, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God« (John 1:12—13). Before this spiritual rebirth, John Chrysostom exclaims: »O pure throes of labour, spiritual child-birth! O novel bringing-forth! Conception without a womb, birth without a bosom, child-birth without flesh! A spiritual child-birth, a birth caused by grace and the loving kindness of God, a birth of joy and felicity!«⁵³.

5. The fruits of the Holy Spirit

After the sanctification of the worshipper and the resurrection of the likeness of God par excellence, another conduct is required, another »way of life«, analogous to the supreme gifts bestowed on the soul, »for, indeed, our vestments are spiritual, our food is spiritual and our drink is spiritual; consequently our works and all our deeds should be spiritual«. For they are the fruit of the Spirit; as Paul says: »the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control« (Gal 5:22)⁵⁴. St Paul refers to love as the first fruit of the Holy Spirit, and the hierarchy likewise gives it precedence over all the other virtues⁵⁵. »Love is the root, the source, the mother of all good things. Like a root, it produces a myriad branches of virtue; like a source, it gives birth to many waters, and like a mother, it hugs to its bosom those who seek refuge in it«⁵⁶. This godlike virtue is the sign by which the followers of Christ are recognised: »not by signs but by love, Christ said, they would be recognised as his disciples«⁵⁷. He who has received the grace of the Holy Spirit has no reason to be despondent. »Therefore when God calls to someone faint-hearted, what being could be sunk in faint-heartedness?«⁵⁸. The reconciliation of man with God spread joyfulness across heaven: »therefore when angels rejoice, and archangels, and the Lord of all heavenly powers concelebrates with us, what grounds are there left for despondency?«⁵⁹.

⁵² Baptismal Catechese, op. cit., 4, 14, SC 50 (1957), p. 190.

⁵³ Hom. on the Acts of the Apostles, 3: PG 60, 800.

⁵⁴ Baptismal Catechese, op. cit., 4, 27, SC 50 (1957), p. 196.

⁵⁵ Cf. Hymn Irmos of d'Ode, Ton 3; cf. Gal 5, 22—24.

⁵⁶ Hom. on the Pentecost: PG 50, 473 A.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Isaac the Syrian*, Ascetic writings, Hom. 72, On the Holy Spirit, Thessaloniki 1976, ed. by B. Rigopoulos, p. 350 (in Greek).

⁵⁸ Hom. on the Acts of the Apostles 3: PG 60, 73 B.

⁵⁹ Cf. Hom. on the Resurrection: PG 50, 441 B.

Gentleness, one of the Lord's virtues, lifts up the meek person above earthly and visible things: »such a person will disdain all the glory of the present life and nothing visible will attract him; for he will acquire other eyes«⁶⁰. Faith and faithfulness — necessary for justification in Christ and for salvation — are also fortified by the Holy Spirit. »For this reason it is called faith, since it has nothing visible, but all things can be viewed by the eyes of the spirit«⁶¹. In particular, he stresses the permanence of self-control: »we pray constantly for a curb, so as to proceed in well-ordered fashion«⁶².

The results of the Comforter's visit to the Apostles and disciples were visible at Pentecost. »For he comforted them, gloomy over the departure of the Lord and full of despondency; he illuminated them through his personal light; almost fallen, he raised them up, dispelled the cloud of despondency and dissolved their perplexity«⁶³. Since then, »from reading of the Scriptures (he bestows) sufficient comfort«⁶⁴ »to saddened souls«⁶⁵.

The Holy Spirit strengthens the soul reborn from above in its struggle against the evil one⁶⁶. Those who have been purified by the blood of Christ through the Holy Spirit are free from the power of sin and from slavery to the passions: »for if there is joy in heaven and earth over the return of one sinner, how much more is there joy in heaven upon the snatching of the whole universe from the hands of the devil!«⁶⁷. Thanks to the Lord's ransoming of us, everyone is freed by the Holy Spirit, and from the state of slavery is led to the state of adoption: »not only was the pardon of sins granted to us, but also justice and sanctification and adoption«⁶⁸. The sons of God by grace are brothers of Christ and coinheritors with Him of the kingdom⁶⁹. This adoption by God gives filial confidence in our prayers to the sanctified⁷⁰: »The Holy Spirit, capable to bestow on us much justice, will fill (us) with much filial confidence in prayer« (τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα καὶ πάντα δυνάμενον ... πολλὴν δὲ ἡμῖν χαριεῖται δικαιοσύνην καὶ πολλῆς ἐμπλήσσει παρρησίας)⁷¹.

This wealth of gifts of the Spirit is continually enriched by another boundless gift, that of hope, which contains all the virtues and leads the believer from the stifling boundaries of this world to eternity. Through hope, fear of death is overcome: »(God) assumed the first-fruits of our nature and gave us in return the grace of the Spirit... So, even if

⁶⁰ Baptismal Catechese 1, 31, *SC* op.cit., p. 124.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 2, 15, p. 143.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 5, 16, p. 208.

⁶³ Hom. on the Pentecost 3: *PG* 50, 472 B.

⁶⁴ Hom. on the Acts of the Apostles 3: *PG* 60, 73 B.

⁶⁵ Cf. Hymn of doxastikon of the Feast of Pentecost.

⁶⁶ Baptismal Catechese 5, 27, *SC*, op. cit., pp. 213–214.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3, 5, p. 153; cf. also *St John Damascene*, *Sacra Parallela*: *PG* 95, 1276–77.

⁶⁸ Hom. on the Resurrection: *PG* 50, 441 A.

⁶⁹ Hom. on the Gospel of St John: *PG* 59, 94.

⁷⁰ Cf. *St Arsene the Cappadocian*, ed. by the Monastery of the Sisters of St John the Theologian, Souroti/Thessaloniki 1975, p. 59: The author describes the life of St. Arsene who was blessed by this grace of God in a permanent action of the Holy Spirit.

⁷¹ Baptismal Catechese, 1. 47, op.cit., p. 132; see also 3, 5, p. 153.

someone menaces me with the undying worm, the unquenchable fire and other forms of hell and punishment, I shall not fear, but I know about my salvation⁷². Albeit adorned with such a great spiritual gift, life on earth is but the promise of good things to come: »Just as, through a contract, he who has received an engagement is cheered and full of faith, so you, upon receiving the engagement of the Spirit — I mean his gifts —, doubt no more concerning the proffered good things«⁷³.

6. The Holy Spirit sanctifies the whole of creation

The holy Church of Christ does not work the sanctification of humankind only, but of the whole creation⁷⁵. And just as creation fell away with the disobedience of the first Adam, so it can be restored by the obedience of the new Adam. The Holy Spirit sanctifies everything that bears a relationship to the believer: time, space, objects. All things can be spiritualised within their sphere of activity. Again, this is a transformation achieved by the Holy Spirit; that is why every sanctifying ritual contains an invocation to the Holy Spirit. As a result of this conception of the world, the Church has developed a vast number of rites⁷⁶, which embrace all the manifestations of human life, even the most unimportant⁷⁷. The great prayer book (Mega Euchologion) of the Orthodox Church absolutely reflects that Church's world view.

John Chrysostom is also a partisan of this view. As an example we quote from one of his catechetical sermons⁷⁸: »The grace of the Spirit is also that which sanctifies the nature of the waters«⁷⁹. This sacred activity of the Spirit, this high-priestly function of it in the Church, washing away the stain of fallen nature with the pure blood of Christ's saving sacrifice, will not cease to be until the end of the world⁸⁰. »Therefore as Christ said concerning himself: Behold I am with you all days until the end of the ages«⁸¹, and we are always able to celebrate his manifestation, so also concerning the Spirit he said that unto ages it will be with you and that we can celebrate Pentecost forever«⁸². Thus nourished

⁷² Hom. on the Pentecost 1: *PG* 50, 465—6 D—A.

⁷³ Hom. on the Resurrection: *PG* 50, 435 E.

⁷⁴ Baptismal Catechese 4, 4, op.cit., p. 184.

⁷⁵ Cf. 1 Tim 4:4—5: »For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.«

⁷⁶ Cf. B. Bobrinskoy, (The rites) *Ἀγιαστική πράξις* (The sanctified praxis), *ThEE* 1 (1962) 240 (in Greek).

⁷⁷ J. Popović, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, Thessaloniki 1974, p. 103 (in Greek). Fr Justin even justifies that in the mysteries of the Orthodox Church even a »kyrie eleison« or a simple act of penance or the thinking of prayer, all are »holy mysteries« in the mystery of the Incarnated Christ.

⁷⁸ Baptismal Catechese 2, 10, op.cit., p. 138: »... Ἡ τοῦ Πνεύματος χάρις ἐστὶν ἡ καὶ τῶν ὑδάτων τὴν φύσιν ἀγιάζουσα«.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Cf. Apoc 19, 90: »And he faith unto me, write, blessed, are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.«

⁸¹ Cf. *St Arsene the Cappadocian*, op.cit., p. 112: »The grace of God is not like a fountain which its water is drying up but like an unexhaustible one.«

⁸² Ibid..

in the Spirit and »receiving grace upon grace, as time passes, so the passionate bridegroom grows, so the embraces become more real, so the carnal union becomes more spiritual, if we live soberly«⁸³. This last condition, »if we live soberly« is the only human contribution to the act of salvation. It is the conscious acceptance of God's will, until Christ shall be formed in us (Gal 4:1a), taking the only road which the Mother of God followed: »behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word« (Luke 1:38).

⁸³ Hom. on the Resurrection: PG 50, 445 E.

