

How the Holy Spirit Works in Our Souls in Different Ways

From a homily by a spiritual writer of the fourth century

(Hom. 18, 7-11: PG 34, 639-642)

May you be filled to the complete fullness of Christ

Those who have been considered worthy to go forth as the sons of God and to be born again of the Holy Spirit from on high, and who hold within them the Christ who renews them and fills them with light, are directed by the Spirit in varied and different ways and in their spiritual repose they are led invisibly in their hearts by grace.

At times, they are like men who mourn and lament over their fellow men, and pouring forth prayers for the whole human race, they plunge into tears and lamentation, on fire with spiritual love for mankind.

At other times they are enkindled by the Spirit with love and exultation that, were it possible, they would clasp in their embrace all mankind, without discrimination, good and bad alike.

Sometimes they are cast down below all mankind in lowliness of spirit, so that they reckon theirs to be the lowest and most abject of conditions.

And sometimes they are held by the Spirit in ineffable joy. At one time they are like a brave man who puts on the king's full armor and goes down into battle; he fights bravely against the enemy and defeats them. In like manner, the spiritual man takes up the heavenly arms of the Spirit and marches against the enemy and engaging in battle tramples the foe beneath his feet.

At another time the soul is at rest in deepest silence, tranquility and peace, existing in sheer spiritual pleasure and in ineffable repose and a perfect state.

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Again, the soul is instructed by grace in a certain understanding in the ineffable wisdom and the inscrutable knowledge of the Spirit on matters which neither tongue nor lips can utter.

Then again, the soul becomes like any ordinary man.

In such varied ways does grace work within them and many are the means by which it leads the soul, renewing it according to God's will and training it in different ways so that it may be set before the heavenly Father pure and whole and blameless.

We, too, therefore must make our prayer to God and entreat in love and in great hope that he may bestow upon us the heavenly grace of the gift of the Spirit. We pray that we, too, may be guided by that Spirit and that he may lead us into the fullness of divine will and refresh us with the varied kinds of his repose, that by the help of this guidance, exercise of grace and spiritual advancement, we may be considered worthy to attain to the perfection of the fullness of Christ, as the Apostle says: *that you may be filled to the complete fullness of Christ.*