

***Inscape* February 2017**

© Stillpoint Contemplative Ministries

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

May you always be consciously aware of the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love and mercy of God the Father, and communion with the Life-Giving Holy Spirit dwelling within your heart!

THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE GIFT OF MERCIFUL LOVE

What we are seeing in our modern technological world and in our own individual lives is a crying out almost in desperation to discover ourselves as unique, beautiful, joyful persons who feel themselves worthwhile and loved by others. Through our hyperactivity, the super-stimulation of our sense perceptions from mass communication, and depersonalization brought about by our technological world, all of us desire a greater sense of our personhood and individuation in our relationships with one another, with God, and with the world around us.

Western organized religions, which tend toward teachings and dogmas, hierarchical structures of authority and liturgical ritualism are finding a need to revitalize themselves. The faithful are in search of transcendence and intimate, immanent, personal encounters with a living God. This God truly loves them and transforms their brokenness and darkness into new, loving creativity to help cocreate with God a better society that reflects the immanent presence of the Trinity in all of creation.

Most Christian theologians, both of the Eastern and Western Churches, generally complain that preachers and parishioners tend to neglect the importance of the Holy Spirit in Christian piety. No doubt this is due to the modern technological tendency to objectivize the spiritual world, including the Trinity.

What is greatly needed to revitalize the importance of the Holy Spirit is to learn from the early Eastern Christian Fathers, the mystics and theologians, and their mystical and apophatic approach to the Holy Spirit. These early Eastern Fathers approached the Spirit in both the Old and New Testaments, but also and most importantly they developed their teaching (Orthodoxia), not as an independent doctrine, but always in the context of their teachings on Christ, the Holy Trinity, redemption, grace, and the ascetical life (Orthopraxis).

It is interesting to note that only after the early Fathers had valiantly fought the heresies of Arianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism did Saint Athanasius in his *Letters to Serapion*, Saint Basil in his *On the Holy Spirit*, and Saint Cyril of Alexandria in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John* write the three most important patristic writings on the Holy Spirit. Because of their use of the scriptural symbols that referred to the Holy Spirit and their apophatic, mystical approach to the Trinity, the Orthodox and other Eastern Christian Churches have relied principally on these three works as the essential teaching on the subject of the Holy Spirit.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD

As was pointed out in September 2016 *Inscape* Newsletter, “apophaticism” is a key term among the mystical writers of the Christian East. This was especially evident in the writings of Saint Athanasius, Saint Basil the Great, and Saint Cyril of Alexandria of Egypt on the Holy Spirit. They were very aware that in writing about the Holy Spirit there was a need to seek a “higher” form of knowledge than the *cataphatic*, or positive, knowledge available through human reasoning.

Some things that they wrote about God the Trinity and the Holy Spirit specifically may be understood in some manner through discursive knowledge. Yet in another manner they saw that such knowledge was inadequate with regard to the mystical role of the Spirit in relation to the Trinity with regard to the mission of the Spirit in the created world and in the economy of God's eternal plan of salvation. Thus they saw the apophatic element to be more applicable than a mere negation in the area of human linguistics. Its essential characteristic was always positive and was to be experienced as Christians opened themselves to the release of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives.

Such knowledge is a real knowing that is a gifted experience in love by God-Trinity. God gifts the humble and pure of heart with such knowledge, always as a work of the Holy Spirit. This is clearly highlighted by Saint Basil in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*: "if we are illumined by divine power, and fix our eyes on the beauty of the image of the invisible God, and through the image are led up to the indescribable beauty of its source, it is because we have been inseparably joined to the Spirit of knowledge. He gives those who love the vision of truth the power which enables them to see the image, and this power is himself. He does lead them to knowledge personally. "No one knows the Father except the Son" (Matthew 11:27), and "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3)."

We have no way of knowing the Father but through the Son. In Jesus Christ we not only see the perfect human expression of the eternal Word-Son of the Father, but we also see the image of the Godhead, as it moves eternally to express its fullness in love to his Son. The Father must be in his imaged-Word. The Word has meaning only because he is the exact image (icon) of the Father who is communicating himself in his Word. The Father knows himself only in his image, his Son. The Godhead concentrates his entire essence in the Son, who allows the Father to become the knower and the Son to become known and vice versa. The Son in the Spirit is the knower as he knows the Father to be his total Source and Origin of being and thus the Father is known as Father.

This interrelationship between the Father and Son in self-knowledge cannot be possible except through the Holy Spirit, and that is why, as the Eastern Fathers universally affirmed, that there must be a triple movement within the one Godhead. It is the Holy Spirit who eternally illumines the mystery for the Father and the Son.

The Father and Son mutually know themselves and love themselves through self-giving to each other through the Holy Spirit who is the binding gift of love between the Father and Son.

Thus the Holy Spirit cannot be an accidental relation, a "thing" produced, even from all eternity, but must be in a mysterious, uncreated manner the one that unites the Father and Son eternally in love that cannot be separated from the knowing of the Father in the Son. The Spirit makes it possible for the unity of the Godhead to be shared without destroying that unity in the diversity of the three divine persons who share in that same essence.

The Father is the **Godhead** (Source), the Son is **Begotten** of the Father, and the All-Holy Spirit **Proceeds** from the Father. This terminology is never to be understood as on a time-line existing within material creation. However, the eternal mystery of the One Divine Uncreated Nature (essence) existing within the diversity and uniqueness of each of the Three Persons (hypostasis) within relationship in the **Community of Love** can be humanly experienced.

From this threefold movement, therefore, flows all reality within the Trinity and also within the created order of God's shared being through his uncreated energies of love. The divine Logos is the natural and perfect expression of the Father and is naturally and perfectly expressed by the love of the Father that is the Spirit. Knowledge is not enough; it must be completed by love since it exists in that first movement of self-giving. Love completes knowledge, and, although knowledge and love are not the same, within the Trinity the Son is known in the love of the Father. Knowing the Father in his returned love can be possible only

through “realized love,” which is the Spirit proceeding from the Father and radiating the Son back to the Father.

If there were only the Father and the Son, there would be no community of two persons giving themselves to each other and fructifying a third in an *I-Thou-We* community. There would be no movement outside of a mutual desire toward *union*. The result would be not only a denial of the Trinity, but a negation of a God who has so loved us as to give us his Only-Begotten-Son so that in his gift, the Spirit of Love, we might have eternal life (John 3:16).

True love is driven to a transcendence that wants love received to be shared by a third person. The Son wants to love the Father with a perfect mutual love just as the Father loves him. It would be an imperfection between the Father and the Son if their love did not want to be shared with a third. To share this mutual love there is need of a loved one that is loved equally as the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. This is the Holy Spirit.

Thus the Holy Spirit must find his uniqueness as the personalized act of love coming out of the mutual love of the Father and Son, loving each other in their mutual gift of love, their Holy Spirit. His being as a person within the Trinity consists in being the act of union and distinction between the Father and Son, and in this “action” the Spirit finds his *personhood*. Thus the Spirit can never be considered apart from either the Father or the Son.

Our Christian faith assures us from the Old and New Testament revelations that God, as a Trinitarian community of love, explodes in their *kenotic* or self-emptying love to create a world of seemingly infinite diversity. Yet all multiplicity is continually being guided by the loving, overshadowing Holy Spirit to fashion a oneness, the fullness of the Logos-God, enfleshed in matter. The Spirit is moving throughout the material world, lovingly drawing God’s embryonic creation into the definitive unity.

Saint Athanasius in the fourth century expressed such Christian optimism in a world moving toward beauty and harmony through the working of the Holy Spirit: “Like a musician who has attuned his lyre, and by artistic blending of low and high tones produces a single melody, so the Wisdom of God, holding the universe like a lyre, adapting things heavenly to things earthly, and earthly things to heavenly, harmonizes them all, and leading them by his will, makes one world-order in beauty and harmony.”

God the Father utters his creative Word by calling his Spirit down upon the cosmos in a continuous cosmic *epiclesis*, which means in Greek a calling down upon something, to divinize matter into spirit.

[From the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom: Furthermore, we offer You (the Father) this spiritual and unbloody sacrifice, and we implore and pray and beg of You: send down Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts that are offered here.

O Lord, Who did send down Your Most Holy Spirit upon Your Apostles at the third hour: Take Him not away from us, O Good One, but renew Him in us who pray to You.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

O Lord, Who did send down Your Most Holy Spirit upon Your Apostles at the third hour: Take Him not away from us, O Good One, but renew Him in us who pray to You.

Cast me not away from Your Presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

O Lord, Who did send down Your Most Holy Spirit upon Your Apostles at the third hour: Take Him not away from us, O Good One, but renew Him in us who pray to You.

“And make this bread (+) the precious Body of your Christ.” Amen! “And that which is in this chalice (+) the precious Blood of your Christ.” Amen! “Changing them by your Holy Spirit.” Amen! Amen! Amen!]

God in the Old Testament and also in the New breathes his breath, his *ruah*, his loving Spirit, as the principle of life into all his creation. The beasts of the land are sustained by his breath. The heavens are also the work of God’s enspiriting breath, his spirit (Genesis 7:15).

In a special way God breathes his breath into man and woman and they become human persons, made in God's own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). All of us human beings, by the inbreathing of God's Spirit, are called to cooperate in harmonizing all of creation into a work of conscious love, a harmony of diversity in oneness through love (Genesis 1:28-30).

A universal statement repeated by all the Eastern Fathers concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit is that the Logos incarnated came into this world as totally human in order that we human beings might become God by grace.

JESUS REVEALS TO US THE SPIRIT

We see, therefore, that the Spirit has always been working together with the Logos as the power of God's love to actuate and harmonize the potentialities locked into the Trinitarian creation of all material creatures. The Spirit, as we see in the Gospel account of the annunciation of the Good News that would bring about a New Creation, "overshadowed" Mary and made her a temple for the real Ark of the Covenant, Jesus Christ. The Word incarnate comes to lead us *from* the sickness of sin, through forgiveness, and prompt our acceptance of God's mercy. He is the only way for the "imperfect" to become holy and sinless.

Once the Word becomes flesh, it is Jesus Christ, the Word and the Son of the Father incarnate out of love for us, who brings us into the awesome mystery of the Trinity as a communion in its own life through his revealing Holy Spirit.

To the risen Jesus it has been given by the Father to bestow upon us the power and glory of God's Spirit. This Spirit of perfect and eternal love could not be given to us until Jesus had freely died for us (John 7:39). He promised that the Father would send us the Holy Spirit as a Paraclete, Consoler and Advocate, a help to us, so that we could live forever in our new oneness with the risen Lord and his eternal Father that the Spirit would bring about. "But I tell you the truth. It is better for you that I should go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I should go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7).

A unique insight of great originality is given by Saint Athanasius, as we already mentioned. It is the role of the Holy Spirit, sent into our hearts by the Father and the Son (Romans 5:5), to perfect what the Son has made possible by divinizing us into loving children of the heavenly Father (Romans 8:15-16). Athanasius writes: "The Son is in the Spirit and in his own image just as the Father is in the Son. The Spirit has been called and is really the Image of the Son....Since therefore they [the heretics, especially the Pneumatomachoi] hold that the Son is not a creature; his image cannot either be a creature. For, as such is the Image, so such must necessarily be he of whom he in the Image. It is clear that he is not a creature who is not absolutely of the nature of angels who are fallible, but who is the Image of the Son and he the Image of the Father. The Son is the Image of the invisible God and the Spirit is the Image of the Son."

Saint John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, cannot get over the miracle of our regeneration, our rebirth, not by water alone, but by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3,5). "Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are" (1 John 3:1). Saint Paul describes the main work of the Spirit as bringing us into a new life, a life in Jesus which regenerates us into true children of God: "The Spirit of God has made his home in you....and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you" (Romans 8:9, 11).

God's very own Spirit dwells within us as in his temple (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We possess through the Spirit the fullness of the Triune God living and acting in love within us at all times during our waking and sleeping hours. This Spirit of love brings new life to its fullness to the

extent that we allow the Spirit to become our Guide, Teacher, and Revealer, as he guides us Christians to make choices according to the mind of Christ.

Jesus is the perfect Image (Icon) of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15), especially as he, who was one with God from all eternity, did not deem it an honor to hold on to his divinity, but he “emptied” (*kenosis*, the act of self-emptying) himself by freely dying for us human beings (Philippians 2:6-7). If the Holy Spirit is the perfect Image of the Son, how does the Spirit image the Son? Jesus promised that the work of the Spirit would be “to teach you everything and to call to your mind all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). The imaging by the Spirit of Jesus Christ is the total self-emptying love that constitutes the Spirit’s uniqueness within the Trinity and in his unique activities in the economy of salvation. He witnesses to the first Apostles and through their faith (Orthodoxia) to future Christians that Jesus is truly *Lord and Master*, which for Saint Paul is a confession of faith in the divinity of Jesus, one with the Father through the Spirit.

The Spirit witnesses to the living presence of the risen Jesus and makes him present among the members of Christ’s body, the Church, { Christ is among us! } living intimately within the individual Christian (John 14:23). The same Spirit in his self-emptying as perfect gift of love images Christ’s humility; the Spirit hides himself as an independent entity who lives to exalt the Father and the Son in glory and power and love. The Spirit has no “face” or identity except by being poured-out love that is his personhood in action as he lives to serve the revelation of the Father and the Son through the hidden love that unites us with the Father and Son. In a miracle of miracles, the Spirit lives as true love must, to bring forth the uniqueness of each Christian member in the Body of Christ.

OUR DIVINIZATION BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Saint Symeon the New Theologian (**The Mystic of Fire and Light**; +1022), one of the greatest mystics of the Eastern Churches, although he never wrote a complete treatise on the Holy Spirit as did Athanasius and Basil, added a new dimension to our understanding. He shows originality in boldly teaching the need which he sees grounded in Holy Scripture, not only of a baptism of water, but also an added stage in the Christian’s life which he calls the **baptism in the Holy Spirit**. He is careful to point out that the Christian’s first baptism truly confers grace with the indwelling of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet there still is a fuller possession of the Spirit that comes through a deeper faith. This infusion of faith by the Holy Spirit comes about only through life’s trials and tribulations that challenge us to turn in repentance to the Lord as Savior and Healer. He writes: “In Holy Baptism we receive remission of our faults; we have been delivered from the ancient curse; we are sanctified by the presence of the Holy Spirit. But the perfect grace according to promise: “I will dwell in them and walk among them” (2 Corinthians 6:16), we have not yet received for it is the inheritance of the faithful confirmed in the faith who have tested their faith by their works.”

For Symeon the important question posed to baptized Christians is not whether the Holy Spirit lives within us, but whether we are **consciously aware** of the Holy Spirit through a penitential conversion that must be a continuous process.

Symeon conceives the operations of the Holy Spirit in us in a twofold manner: one, divinizing us to become truly children of God by grace and adoption, and the other, the continued process of sanctification, especially by means of illumination and revelation.

Using patristic language, Symeon over and over comes back to his fixed formula that the Holy Spirit regenerates us, making us children of God, gods by adoption, by “disposition and grace”: “The adoption through regeneration is due to the Holy Spirit who makes us become gods by disposition and grace [in Greek: *thesei kai chariti*], who makes us to be called heirs of

God and coheirs with Christ...whereby we see God and Christ himself living in us according to his divinity and moving around in a conscious [*gnostos*] manner within us”.

Symeon insists on the need for personal illumination by the Holy Spirit to understand Holy Scripture. Then in the light of the interior message that God reveals through his Holy Spirit, we are able to know the commandments, i.e., the will of God concretized in daily life. The Holy Spirit makes it possible to become children of light, but also for us to live lives as individual and unique children of God. The Holy Spirit vivifies us. He is our food and our drink. He it is who transforms bread and wine into the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of Christ. But when we experience the grace of the Holy Spirit covering ourselves with clear knowledge, we know that we have put on Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of God is called “Holy” in Scripture. As all three persons in the Trinity are spirit, so all three are holy. God is holy in his self-giving love of himself to us in and through the Holy Spirit. God’s holiness is seen as he gives himself to us as a gift of love so we can truly participate in his very nature (2 Peter 1:4). In this very holy union, there is diversity of unique personhood of ourselves and each member of the Trinity. In their uncreated energies, distinct from the one essence of God that is totally incomprehensible by us, they give themselves to us freely. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who gives us new illumination and knowledge beyond our mere natural understanding; we are called to live in an ecstatic union within the Trinity of the *I* and the *Thou* and the *We*. The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring us into God’s holiness, and thus we become holy as our Father and Jesus Christ are holy.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria well summarizes the doctrine of the Eastern Fathers concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. He teaches that the Spirit is the bond of union which binds us to the Son and the Father. The Spirit is the image (icon) of the Son and consequently the image of the Father. He is the sanctifying power of the divinity. Sanctity is as essential to the Holy Spirit as paternity is to the Father and filiation is to the Son.

Perhaps the best summation of what we have written this month in *Inscape* on the apophatic nature of the Holy Spirit can be found in one of Saint Symeon the New Theologian’s *Hymns of Divine Love*:

HYMN 44

What it means to be created according to the Image of God. In what sense is it proper to consider man as the image of the Model; and that he who loves His enemies as benefactors is an imitator of God and through this becomes a participator of the Holy Spirit, becoming god by adoption and grace, but this is recognizable only by those who are moved by the Holy Spirit.

Glory, praise, hymn, thanksgiving to Him
 through whom from nothingness the entire creation has come into being,
 thanks to His only Word and His own will.
 To God of all, adored in the Trinity of Hypostases and in
 the one essence!
 For God is one, holy Trinity.
 A being above all being,
 One in Three Persons, and in Three Hypostases,
 undivided and inseparable,
 one nature, one glory, one power as also with one will.
 It alone is the Creator of all.
 It from mud fashioned me completely giving me a soul
 and placing me on the earth.
 It gave me light to see

and in it to contemplate the entire sensible world:
 the sun, moon, I say, the stars and the heavens,
 the earth and the sea and all creatures that are within it.
 It gave me both an intellect and speech,
 but be attentive to what I say!

It is thus according to the image of the Word
 that the word has been given to us.
 For we are endued with reason through the Logos
 who is without beginning, uncreated,
 incomprehensible, my God.
 Thus the soul of each man according to the Image
 is made a rational image of the Logos.
 How is that, tell me, teach me?
 Listen to His Word!
 The Word, God from God,
 is co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit.
 Therefore likewise is my soul according to His image.

It has an intelligence and reason;
 this flows from its essence without separation and confusion.
 They are likewise of the same substance;
 three united together in one, but also distinct.
 They are always united and still they are separated.
 For they are united without confusion
 and they are separated without division.
 If you take away one from the three,
 you take away at the same time all of them.
 For the soul, without intelligence, without reason,
 would be like to irrational animals,
 but it is impossible without the soul
 for the intelligence or the reason to subsist.

Therefore by starting from the image know what the model is!
 Without the Spirit there is neither the Father nor His Son,
 but the Father is spirit and His Son is spirit,
 even if He has clothed Himself with flesh,
 and the Spirit is also God.
 For the Three constitute one in nature and in essence,
 just as the intelligence, soul and reason.

But the Father in an ineffable way has begotten the Word,
 so the intelligence is begotten from my soul, or rather in my soul.
 Just as the Spirit comes from the Father
 or rather both lives in the Father and in an ineffable manner proceeds.
 And in a similar way my intelligence is always begetting the word,
 and emits it and sends it forth and manifests it to all who hear,
 but still it is not separated from it,
 but it begets the word
 and holds it within itself.
 Likewise think of the Father,
 thus He has begotten the Word,
 He is continuously begetting Him
 without in any way separating the Father from His Son. But on the contrary, He is seen in His Son and the Son

abides in Him.

This is the exact image, even if it is obscured,
 that my discourse has outlined,
 the image which you will never see,
 nor completely comprehend,
 if first you do not purify,
 if first you do not wash
 the filth from your image,
 if you do not separate the image
 from the passions that entammel it,
 if you do not wipe it perfectly,
 if you do not likewise strip it
 and make it white as snow.

But even when you have done all of this
 and have well purified yourself,
 and have become the perfect image,
 you will not see the Model.
 You will not comprehend Him
 unless He will be revealed to you through the Holy Spirit.
 For the Spirit teaches everything, shining in an ineffable light,
 and He will show you in an intellectual way
 all the intelligible realities
 as much as you can see,
 as much as is accessible to me
 according to the measure of the purity of your soul.
 And you will become like to God,
 in imitating exactly His works of not only temperance and courage,
 but also His love for men,
 also in bearing with patience trials
 and in loving your enemies.
 For this is love for mankind – to do good to your enemies
 and to love them as your friends, as genuine benefactors,
 to pray for all those who seek to injure you
 and to have towards all, both the good and bad,
 a genuine interior love;
 indeed, to put your life at every hour for all;
 I mean, for their salvation,
 in order that one of them may be saved
 or even all of them if possible.
 Such things will make of you an imitator of the Master, my child,
 and will manifest in you the true image of your Creator,
 an imitator in all things of the divine perfection.
 Then the Creator, be attentive to what I am about to explain to you!
 will send the Divine Spirit.
 I am not speaking of another soul such as you have;
 but of the Spirit, I mean, who comes from God,
 who breathes where He abides,
 who will take His abode substantially in you
 and will illumine and cast His light and recreate you completely
 who will make you incorruptible,
 you who are corruptible.
 He will make new again the antiquated house,
 the house of your soul, I mean.

And with it He will render totally incorruptible your complete body.
 He will make you god by grace, similar to your Model.
 O marvel! O mystery unknown to all,
 who are prisoners of their passions,
 unknown to the friends of the world,
 unknown to the friends seeking glory,
 unknown to the proud,
 unknown to the irascible,
 to those bearing malice,
 to those friends of the flesh,
 to those friends of money,
 to the envious, to the detractors,
 to hypocrites, to gourmands, gluttons, to drunkards and fornicators,
 to those who speak idle words,
 to those who speak crude words,
 to the negligent, to those who are not constantly
 concerned with repentance,
 to those not constantly filled with compunction
 to the impatient, to the retorters,
 to those living with no fixed rule,
 to those who believe themselves something they really are not,
 to those who are puffed up or who take pleasure in their bodily stature,
 or in their strength or beauty
 or any other charism whatever it may be,
 I mean, to those not given to a pure heart,
 to those not seeking a fervent heart to receive the Holy Spirit,
 to those not believing that God gives the Divine Spirit
 to those who truly seek Him.

For disbelief disperses and chases away the Divine Spirit.
 Whoever disbelieves does not seek;
 not asking, he does not receive;
 not receiving he is dead.
 Who will not weep for the dead person,
 who, dead though he is, thinks he is still alive?
 The dead are totally unable either to see or to lament their dead selves.
 The living, seeing them, are filled with sorrow.
 For they see a strange marvel:
 men who live have been struck down by death,
 still they walk about.
 The blind believe they see and the deaf think they can hear.
 For they live and see and hear as do animals.

They think as irrational animals;
 in their conscience they are unconscious;
 in their life they are cadavers.
 It is possible to live without living,
 it is possible to see without seeing,
 to hear without hearing.
 How? tell me!
 I will tell how immediately.

All who live according to the flesh,
 all who see only the things below and who hear the divine words,

all of these according to the spirit, are deaf, blind and even dead.
 If they are not born of God completely, in such a way
 that they are living but have not received the Spirit,
 their pupils (of their eyes) have not been opened.
 They do not see the divine light.
 And not being able to do this, they remain perfectly deaf.
 But such as these, tell me, how can they be called Christians?
 Listen to the divine Paul who clarifies these matters to you.
 Or rather it is Christ who speaks to you:
 "Man, the first man was created from earth completely earthly;
 the second man is of Heaven who descended."
 Be attentive to these words!
 So also just as the first man was earthly,
 so also those born from him are earthly.
 But such as is Christ, the Heavenly Master, so also are those
 of Heaven who have believed in Him,
 they are born from above,
 and have been likewise baptized in the most Holy Spirit.
 Such is the Spirit who, being God, gave birth to those
 who became gods from God by Adoption
 and all sons of the All-High,
 as the divine mouth says.

Have you heard the words of God?
 Have you heard how He separates the believers from the other men,
 how He gave a sign of recognition of His servants,
 in order that they may not be led into error
 by the words of strange teachers?
 "From the earth," he says, "the first man came,
 since he was created earthly;
 but the Second Man, the Master of all,
 has descended from the heavens."
 The first man has procured death for all men
 and by his turning away also corruptibility.
 The Second, however, gave to the world and still now,
 gives to all the faithful light, life and incorruptibility.
 You have heard Christ saying about Himself and teaching men
 what sort they are who have believed in Him
 and who prove well their faith through their works?
 Therefore, do not hesitate further if you are a Christian.
 As Christ is heavenly, such also ought you to be.
 But if you are not such, how can you be called a Christian?
 If indeed the Master is heavenly,
 so He says also are those who believe in Him heavenly,
 such as those who think worldly thoughts,
 such as live according to the flesh,
 are not of God the Word who came down from on high,
 but they belong to him who has been fashioned out of the earth,
 completely earthly men.
 So ponder, conduct yourself, believe and strive to become such,
 heavenly as He has come from Heaven has said and has given
 life to the world!
 This is He, the bread that comes down from above;
 those who eat Him will never see any more death.

For, being of Heaven, they will always be completely
 freed of corruption,
 for they have put on incorruption.
 They have put off death
 and are intimately united to life.
 For they have become immortal, incorruptible
 and because of this are called heavenly.

Who in fact has ever merited this name,
 I mean, among the sons of Adam up until He
 descended from Heaven, the Master of all beings of Heaven and earth?
 He it is who took on flesh, our flesh
 and gave us the Divine Spirit, as I have often said,
 and this Spirit, being God, procures for us all good things.
 What are these?
 Those that I have often told you about,
 but I will now retell them.
 Like a piscine (of Baptism) the Holy Spirit, divine and all luminous,
 embraces all those who are worthy, all whom He finds inside –
 how shall I explain, how express worthily these effects?

Give me the word, You who gave gifted me, O my God, with my soul.
 Being God, the Divine Spirit refashions completely those whom He
 receives within Himself.
 He makes them completely anew.
 He renews them in an amazing manner.
 How can He avoid taking on something of the same filth of them?
 Not any more than fire takes on the black iron;
 but on the contrary it gives to it all of its own properties.
 So likewise the Divine Spirit, incorruptible, gives incorruptibility.
 Being immortal, He gives immortality.
 Because He is light that never sets,
 He transforms all of them into light
 in whom He comes down and dwells.
 And because He is life, He bestows life to all.
 As He is of the same nature as Christ, being of the same essence
 as well as the same in glory,
 and being united with Him, He forms them absolutely similar to Christ.

For the Master is not jealous
 that mortals should appear equal to Himself by divine grace,
 that He does not disclaim as unworthy
 His servants from becoming like to Him.
 But rather He is happy and He rejoices
 in seeing all of us, from mere humans to become by grace
 such as He was and is by nature.
 For He is our Benefactor
 and He wishes that all of us become what He Himself is.
 For if we are not strictly like unto Him,
 how can we be united to Him as He said?
 How indeed can we remain in Him
 if we are not such as He is?

How will He abide in us if we are not similar to Him?
Therefore, as you wisely understand this,
hasten to receive the Spirit, who comes from God and is divine,
in order that you may become such as my discourse has explained,
heavenly and divine, such as the Master spoke of
in order to become heirs of the Heavenly Kingdom for ever.

But if you are not such
or if here below you do not become heavenly, as I said,
how can you even imagine to dwell with Him in Heaven?

How can you enter into the Kingdom with the heavenly creatures
and reign and live with the King and Master of all?

Run zealously therefore all of you, in order that you may be
judged worthy to be found within the Kingdom of Heaven and to reign
with Christ, the Master of all, to whom is due all glory with the
Father and the Spirit, for ages and ages. Amen.

Glory and Adoration to the Holy, Consubstantial, Undivided, Life-Creating Trinity...**FOREVER!**
Father John Michael Zboyovski