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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 the communion of the Life-Giving Holy Spirit dwelling within your heart!

THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO DWELLS WITHIN EACH OF US

O Heavenly King, the Comforter: the Spirit of Truth, Who are in all places and fill all things; Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life, come and dwell within us and cleanse us from every blemish, and save our souls, O Blessed One. (Priest's prayer as he approaches the altar to begin Divine Liturgy).

What a mystery and yet what a tremendous reality the Holy Spirit of Jesus is. And the Good News is that this Spirit dwells within each of us, empowering with His gifts to experience the love of God the Father and the Son living also within us and to live according to this dignity of being a child of so loving a God.

The first group of followers of Jesus was made up of ordinary men and women, much like us. They were weak and sinful. But they gathered in the Upper Chamber with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and prayed expectantly for a new fire, a release of the Spirit. We all feel a great urgent need for this Spirit's power and guidance to transform our lives into true Christians.

THE SPIRIT DWELLS WITHIN YOU

Once we lived in a world that we separated into two parts. Everything we saw on this earth was labeled as animate or inanimate. Living things as human beings, birds, animals and plants all were "animated" by an inner soul or principle of life. Rocks and solid things like tables and chairs were static, "life-less." They possessed no soul, giving an inner growing and directive force.

But today, nuclear physics speaks like mystical revelations as Einstein and his followers describe for us novices that nothing is static. Everything to the least atom is made up of circles of "animated" forces of energies, broken down into electrons, protons, neutrons. Current scientific knowledge teaches us, that, three families of *quarks* are believed to be one of the basic building blocks of matter. Some of these *quarks* join together to form protons and neutrons. All created matter is moving in harmony, in a unified field of energy that is continually being transformed from a lower complexity in unity to greater degrees of consciousness in oneness. Physicists are searching for the smallest particle that provides mass to all matter, even though they are not sure that it even exists.

Albert Einstein, the great proponent of the theory of relativity, wrote this statement: "the most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms---this knowledge, this feeling is at the centre of true religiousness."

THE HOLY SPIRIT AMORIZES THE UNIVERSE

(To Amorize is to fall in love. Amorized is to be loved and in love)

Our Christian faith assures us that God, as a Trinitarian community of love, explodes in His kenotic or emptying love to create a world of seemingly infinite diversity. Yet all multiplicity is continually being guided in the loving, divine milieu of the over-shadowing Holy Spirit to fashion a oneness, the fullness of the Logos of God enfleshed in matter. The Spirit is moving throughout the material world to “amorize” God’s embryonic creation into the definitive unity, the Body of Christ. Saint Paul expressed the creative process as terminating in the Cosmic Christ. “Where there is neither Jew nor Aramean, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Greek nor barbarian, slave or freeman; but Christ is all and in all men” (Colossians 3:11).

Saint Athanasius expresses such Christian optimism in a world moving toward an ordered beauty and harmony: “Like a musician who has attuned his lyre, and by the artistic blending of low and high and medium tones produce 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 and one world-order in beauty and harmony.”

OVERSHADOWING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

From the Book of Genesis we see at the beginning of the creation by the Trinity, a community of an ***I-Thou*** in a ***We*** community, the presence of the Holy Spirit as God’s creative power. God’s presence as loving “Orderer” and Chief-Harmonizer is seen as His Spirit of love hovering over the chaos and the void like a mighty, cosmic bird, “God created the heavens and the earth in the very beginning. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water” (Genesis 1:1-2).

God the Father utters His creative Word by calling His Spirit down upon the cosmos in a continuous cosmic epiclesis to “divinize” matter into spirit. God breathes His breath, His ruah, His Spirit, as the principle of life into all His creation. The beasts are sustained by His ruah. The heavens are also the work of His in-breathing breath, His Spirit “They went into the ark, two and two of all flesh in which there is the breath of life” (Genesis 7:15).

In a special way God breathes His breath into man and he became a human person (nephesh), capable of communicating with God as one made to share in His very Image and Likeness (Genesis 1:26). But man, by the in-breathing of God’s Spirit, is called also to cooperate (synergy) in harmonizing all of creation into a work of conscious love, a harmony of diversity in oneness through love “And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild beasts that move upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree which bears fruit yielding seed; to you it shall be for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food; and it was so” (Genesis 1:28-30).

A LOVE COVENANT

If God’s Spirit is operating throughout all of nature, fashioning both man and woman, and all other creatures in a mysterious, awesome way, His Spirit is more powerfully operating in His condescending, hesed covenantal love for His chosen people. God’s Spirit comes upon

individuals and his entire people to restore them to new love relationships with Him. God is most Spirit when He is renewing His people by giving them “a new heart.” God breathes His love. Repentance allows His people to open up to receive His breathing-in-Spirit of love to become quickened again, to share life-giving relationships with Yahweh: “A new heart will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you; and I will remove the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And you shall dwell in the land, which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleanness... (Ezekiel 36: 26-29).

We have been made for communion, a “union with” God and fellow human beings. Another way of expressing it is to describe God as love and we, through His abiding, loving presence dwelling within us and inside of each event of every day, are to receive His loving uncreated energies and thus live in communion through His Spirit of love with all persons we meet. We begin to move toward loving communion by means of “communication.”

But communication is only the first step in becoming “present” to another. In such language we relay information to another on a linear level. Such knowledge tends to be logical, facts, ideas that are comprehensible to our human reasoning. Our sciences are examples of such communication. We go to school to receive knowledge of facts. Our lives depend upon such knowledge. We also learn certain facts about God given to us through His revelation in Sacred Scripture and the oral Holy Tradition of the Church.

But there is a higher level of knowledge. This is communion between friends and lovers, between ourselves and our loving God. This communion is effected through the operations of the Holy Spirit “but we discuss the wisdom of God shown in a mysterious way, and it is hidden, but God ordained it before the world for our glory. This none of the rulers of the world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But as it is written, the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard and the heart of man has not conceived the things, which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what man knows the mind of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, no one knows the mind of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, that we may understand the gifts that are given to us by God. For the things which we discuss are not dependent on the knowledge of words and man’s wisdom, but on the teaching of the Spirit; thus explaining spiritual things to the spiritually minded” (1 Corinthians 2: 7-13).

A PRESENCE OF LOVE

God becomes present to us and invites us to intimate union with Him through His Spirit of Love. It is only God’s love, His Spirit, that can bring about true communion in love. When God created woman and gave her to man, He breathed His Spirit of intimate love into them and bound them together into a union, bone from his bones, and flesh from his flesh (Genesis 2:23). God joined them together in love and they shall be “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24) and no force in the world was to cut this union asunder. Christianity would guarantee that whenever we live in love toward each other, it is the Holy Spirit Who is “perfecting” the love of God on earth (1 John 4:12).

In loving another, we become a gifted presence of God’s Spirit of love to that person. We wish to live in union (the true meaning of communion) with that person so as to be present as often as possible, not only physically in space and time, but more importantly in the inner recesses of our consciousness. We become present to each other in deeper and deeper consciousness to the degree that we can share our most intimate thoughts through speech. An often repeated “I love you” is not giving new, logical information, but it is moving toward deeper

communion. We need words as the most ordinary way of communicating our inner self as gift to the other. Without internal words that can be expressed in externalized words, spoken or written or acted out in gestures, we would never grow in love.

But we human beings are this way because God is this way in His nature as Love. God the Father, in absolute silence, in a communication of love impossible for us human beings to understand, speaks His one eternal Word through His Spirit of Love. In that one Word, the Father is perfectly present, totally self-giving to His Son. "In Him lives the fullness of divinity" (Colossians 2:9).

But in His Spirit, the Father, also hears His Word come back to Him in a perfect, eternal "yes" of total surrendering Love that is again the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is a reciprocal community of a movement of the Spirit between Father and Son through the Holy Spirit. God becomes real only because He can communicate in Love with His Word. His Word gives His identity as Father. But that means eternal self-giving to the Other, His Word in Love, the Holy Spirit.

THE WORD REVEALS THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

From the revealed word of God in the Old and New Testaments and in the Living Tradition of the Church through the centuries, the Divine Nature is considered as inaccessible, uncommunicable to us. This is the awesome, transcendent God of majesty appearing to Moses at the burning bush, the God of Isaiah's vision who receives the constant praise of the Trisagion from the six-winged Seraphim who cover their faces with their wings out of reverence.

Yet Jesus Christ promises us that this inaccessible God with the life of the Trinity will descend and enter into our very being. "If anyone loves Me he will keep My word and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make a place of abode with him" (John 14:23). Jesus Christ is the Word and the Son of the Father. He is the way, the truth and the life that brings us into the awesome mystery of the Trinity as a communion in its own life. All other names applied to the Word and the Son, such as Image, Wisdom, Light and Life etc. are summarized in these two central names.

Through the Holy Spirit we can believe from revelation that the Father begets eternally His Only begotten Son through His Spirit of Love, Who proceeds from the Father. He gives Him His every substance, not partially as in human generation, but His total being, all except His very Fatherhood. Since the Son is one in substance with the Father, He, through the Incarnation, can bring us, not only to a knowledge of the Father, but He can actualize ourselves through His Holy Spirit to be children of God, sharing in His very nature by grace (2 Peter 1:4). Saint Athanasius, quoting Saint Irenaeus, could summarize the end of the Incarnation: "For He was made man that we might be made God."

WE REALLY ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

The Spirit that the Risen Jesus sends by asking His Father in glory is seen as the loving force of God Himself, divinizing all who are open to receive His Gift. This holiness given to us to transform us into heirs of God's Kingdom, true children of God (Romans 8:15) is the very indwelling of God's Spirit taking possession of us Christians, as He permeates our mind, our thoughts, and all our actions with the very life of God.

Saint John, the Beloved Disciple of Jesus, cannot get over the miracle of our regeneration, not by water alone but by the 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 never ceases to describe 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).

Such a loving presence so immediately experienced as an indwelling love, fills us with a new inner dignity touching all human relationships of body, soul and spirit. "Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you since you received Him from God. You are not your own property; you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, because they belong to God" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

How can you and I ever again be lonely in the experience of the Indwelling Spirit Who witnesses within us by His gifts of faith, hope and love that the Trinity dwells literally with us and loves us with an infinite and perfect love? We possess the fullness of the Triune God living and acting in love within us at all times, twenty-four hours of our waking and sleeping day and night. God cannot come to us in any fuller way than He, the community of love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is already living within us. The Spirit brings this new life to its fullness in the proportion that we allow the Spirit to become normative in guiding us Christians to make choices according to the mind of Christ.

A NEW FREEDOM

Saint Paul was aware of the freeing power of the Holy Spirit as an ongoing process of leading us out of slavery from sin and death and the Law into true liberty as children of God. "Now this Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17). Saint Paul applies the word, Spirit, to apply to the divine power, the Holy Spirit, sent by God the Father through the merits of Christ and His intercession to effect the work of our sanctification or Christification of mankind.

He assigns to the Holy Spirit the character, initiative and salvific action proper to a person. Through his personal experience "in the Spirit," he had discovered the world of the Spirit. It was for him a "new sphere of life", walking in a New Life (Romans 6:4). The work of the Spirit is to create this new life of Christ in us Christians. As we become alive by the Spirit, so, Saint Paul exhorts us, then we must walk by the Spirit. "This I say then; Lead a spiritual life, and you shall never commit the lust of the flesh"... "Let us therefore live in the Spirit, and surrender to the Spirit" (Galatians 5: 16,25). Christians are *pneumatikoi*, spiritualized by the Spirit, since the primary function of the Spirit is to create this life in Christ. Saint Paul sees the world tied together in a hope of being set free from its slavery to decadence "For man was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who gave him free will in the hope he would choose rightly; because man himself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Romans 8: 20-21). We do not possess the fullness of the Spirit but we have come into the "...first-fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the salvation of our bodies" (Romans 8:23). Still we have the pledge and guarantee of its completion "and who has sealed us, and pledged his Spirit in our hearts" (2 Corinthians 1:22); "In Whom, you also have heard the word of truth, which is the Gospel for your salvation; in Him you have believed, so you are sealed with the Holy Spirit that was promised; Which is the pledge of our inheritance, for the salvation of those who are saved and for the glory of His honor" (Ephesians 1:13-14). Thus we can see that for Saint Paul the phrases "in the Spirit" and "in Christ" complement one another.

GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

You and I are caught between two forces: the power of evil and the Spirit of Christ, between the unspiritual in us and the spiritual. We are to live according to the Spirit, the new principle of Christ-like operations within us. The Spirit has created this new life of Christ living within us. We are now to be “spiritual”, by turning always within to be guided by the Spirit. No longer is there an extrinsic code of morality, a Judaic Law or any other law operating. Saint Paul puts it this way: “If you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit, the Spirit is totally against such a thing...If you are led by the Spirit, no law can touch you...What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control. There can be no law against things like that, of course. You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires. Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16-25).

Only the Spirit of the risen Christ can bring us into true freedom. This highest, human freedom is self-determination in the inmost depths of our being. It is opposed to every kind of external determination which is a force or compulsion from without or from within. We enter into true self-determination only when, in the depths of our meaning, we touch God’s Spirit, Who releases our spirit to become a living movement in freedom toward others. True self-determination and self-giving love to others become synonymous and are the freeing work of the Holy Spirit. For the fruit of the Spirit is Love (Galatians 5:22).

And the basis of true love for both God and other human beings is always the love of God which is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). We can consider the Holy Spirit as the applied love of the crucified Jesus, now Risen and Living within us by the indwelling Spirit. In prayer, the Spirit comes to our spirit and bears united witness that we are truly loved as the Father loves His Eternal and Only Begotten Son (Romans 8:15). God’s very own dynamic current of love, between Father and Son, catches us up and regenerates us into new creatures, ever-more consciously aware of our inner dignity of being so privileged as to be loved infinitely by God. We carry the actual love of God, the Holy Spirit in our hearts. This love is operating at all times, everywhere and in all things, even when we take rest and sleep. The Spirit dominates our spirit as we seek that inner revolution of our mind to yield to God’s Word through the Spirit’s Love. “Do not imitate the way of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that you may discern what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

LISTENING TO THE WORD WITHIN US

The Spirit gives us knowledge and discernment as to what God’s Word is telling us from within us. No longer do we rely on our own powers to fulfill the command of Jesus whereby we and others know we are His true disciples. Sin is put to death as we surrender ourselves to the Indwelling Spirit. We replace ourselves as the center of reference with that of God’s Spirit of Love.

As we experience deep down the Spirit as the love of God for us in Christ Jesus, that same Spirit brings forth His fruits and gifts so that we are turned outward toward others in love “Because the love of Christ overwhelms us”; “For the love of Christ compels us to reason thus...” (2 Corinthians 5:14). Not only does the Spirit bring about a transformation in our consciousness that we are loved constantly by an infinitely loving God, but the same Holy Spirit is the loving energy that allows us to love others with His very own love.

Now we can do what sin in our members (Romans 7:23) prevented us from doing under our own power. We can fulfill the commandments of God: to love God with our whole heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves. To love others as God loves us!

We begin to live on a new elevated level of being. We perceive ourselves in the new light of divine knowledge and understanding. We walk in that inner dignity, all because of what Jesus Christ has done...His Incarnation, the Transfiguration, the Cross, the Tomb, His descent into Hades and the release of all its captives, the Resurrection from the dead on the third day, the Ascension into Heaven, the Sitting at the Right hand of the Father, and the second and awesome glorious coming. (Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom). "For we are His creation, created through Jesus Christ ultimately for good works, and God has before ordained that we should live in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

We see the same world that we looked upon daily before, but now we see "inside." We see that all others are loved infinitely by God, even though they might not have experienced that same Spirit of Love within themselves...yet. We understand that we really are one with them. We "intuit" the Word of God, the Logos, in each person to discover that unique personhood in God's eternal creation of him/her in Christ, His Word. How can we now hurt or reject anyone since all persons are our brothers and sisters, and we all belong to Christ's Body? How can we judge others who in their brokenness and ignorance do not yet realize who they really are? How can we live by violence of any sort since we are listening gently to Christ's Spirit speak to us of how to live by God's loving uncreated energies in each circumstance?

THE SPIRIT UNIFIES PRAYER AND ACTION

By "contemplation" given us by the Spirit, we can already "see" in ourselves the power of the Risen Lord working to transform us into a oneness with Christ and with the world around us. We can also see the power of the Lord Jesus working in the lives of all human persons, existing in relationships of body, soul and spirit; regardless of what culture, religion or heritage. The Spirit fills us with Christian hope and optimism as He points out to us the Risen Christ working in a constant process of evolving through the basic goodness in all beings made according to the Image and Likeness of God (Genesis 1:26).

As we toil painstakingly over the little plot of this universe entrusted to us, we are buoyed up by the vision that God's material world has not been conceived by God to be destroyed but to be transfigured and transformed and brought into its fullness in and by the Spirit of the Risen Jesus. Freed by the Spirit from self-hate and insecurity, from all fears and anxieties, so that we can become the risen presence of Jesus in this world, we go forth at each moment contemplating and acting in the presence and for the glory of the Holy, Consubstantial and Undivided Trinity. Whatever we desire and whatever we do is done for God's glory. All becomes prayer and action, transforming by the Holy Spirit, the void and chaos into the fullness and harmony of love.

St. Symeon the New Theologian (+1022) expresses in his *Hymns of Divine Love* (# 27), the absolute necessity of living a life in the Risen Spirit of Our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Do not say that it is impossible to receive the Divine Spirit.
Do not say without Him you can be saved.
Do not say, therefore, that one can possess Him without knowing it!
Do not say that God is not able to be seen by men.
Do not say that men do not see the divine light
Or that this is impossible in these present times!
This is a thing never impossible, friends,
But on the contrary it is very possible to those who desire it,
But only to those who lead a life purified of passions
And have purified, spiritual eyes.

May God grant all of you...Purified and Spiritual Eyes of Faith.
Fr. John Michael Zboyovski