

Eleven Addresses during a Retreat of the Companions of the Love of Jesus,
engaged in perpetual intercession for the conversion of sinners.

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ADDRESS VII.
The love of God the Holy Ghost for individual souls.

IN dwelling on the love of Jesus for individual souls, the Glory of the Godhead has been shrouded by the Humanity, Which, for love of us, He assumed. We have seen a God manifest in the flesh, though the sight of His Godhead, with that of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, is the fruition of eternity. In thinking of the love of God the Holy Ghost, we are brought face to face with God's immediate invisible but unveiled Presence. May He enable us to think reverently and lovingly at once of His Love!

His office and love for the souls of men are coextensive with our humanity. There is not a human soul, which He does not visit by His Grace. Jesus has merited His Grace for the whole world, and the whole world is full of His love. His love covers and overspreads it, as the light arrays so tenderly and so lovingly all our material creation, transforming things cold and hard and dead and unattractive into its own unspeakable beauty. But in all this wide world the province of His love is every individual soul of man. He works where He is unacknowledged, unknown, unfelt, among those whose language has no name for His operations. What seem like the motions of conscience are the attractive movements of His grace, appealing to man, and drawing him, if even to the Unknown God.

To us Christians He is the special gift of Jesus. He is the common Gift of the Father and the Son; but Jesus sends Him from the Father. "When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father," He says, "even the Spirit of truth Which proceedeth from the Father."¹ Jesus merited His coming for us; but we cannot come to Jesus, except through Him. "No man can come to Me," said our Blessed Lord,² "except the Father, which hath sent Me, draw him." And He "draweth with bands of love,"³ through the Holy Ghost, Who is the Love of the Father and of the Son.

He cannot suffer, as Jesus did, because He is only God, and God is impassible. Yet there must be something analogous to our created affections, in that "God is Love," and, when His Love is repelled, He seemeth to be pained. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye were sealed unto the day of redemption."⁴ He is not visibly insulted, as was Jesus, but He is insulted more manifoldly. The contumelies of Jesus were mostly during His presence on earth. His worship was disputed during those centuries of persecution. They had crucified the Man; and they were maddened to find, that the Man Jesus, Whom they had crucified, was worshipped, as being what He is, Very and Eternal God. They tried to extirpate the faith of the Crucified. The appointed trial-time was completed. Those assaults passed by. Heresy succeeded. Blasphemers still insult Him. His Body and Blood are profaned by hypocritical communicants. But these are

¹ St. John xv. 26.

² Ib. vi. 44.

³ Hos. xi. 4.

⁴ Eph. iv. 30.

comparatively the few. Those who do not love Him, still are mostly afraid to defy Him.

God the Holy Ghost offers His grace to each of those ever-renewed 800 millions of human souls. Every contumely which could be shewn, has been and is shewn to Him. He, the Spirit, Who “brooded over”⁵ and vivified the creation, cometh to His creatures, soliciting their love; and there is no contumely, wherewith they do not repel Him. To reject Him, to refuse to listen to Him, to drown His Voice in some recklessness or vanity; to embolden themselves against Him; to stupefy reason itself by intoxication, in order that the instrument which He acts upon, may not be able to listen to Him; to go and do quickly the things which He implores us not to do, in order to get rid of His importuning:—is a rudeness, which we do not often shew to a fellow-creature. But there is no end of man’s shewing it to Him. Would that we were as much afraid of Him, our God, as we are of the meanest of our fellow-creatures! The presence of one of them will prevent the commission of a sin, which all the pleadings of God the Holy Ghost will not dissuade from.

What is all the excitement of the world, what are the things by which people, as they say, “kill time,” destroying, as far as they are themselves concerned, that time wherein they should “work out their salvation”; what mean those manifold contrivances not to be alone, or the dull, insipid, or sensational, tales with which they occupy the hours, in which they cannot otherwise escape from themselves, and in which they must be alone—what does it all mean but this, to escape the whispers of God the Holy Ghost, which He is ever waiting to utter gently into the ear of the solitary, undistracted, unoccupied soul? Men, or especially women, wish to feel, because feeling is a token of life; but they wish to avoid any real feeling which must in the end cost them something, because it comes from God the Holy Ghost, Who is “the Spirit of truth”⁶ and is very earnest, because it is for their salvation. How will people read all the most insipid pages of a newspaper, because it dulls the craving of the soul after true knowledge, and stops up the avenues to the soul, lest it should be forced to hear the whispering voice of God the Holy Ghost!

At times men call His whispers by rude names. They will call them cowardice, weakness, “want of proper spirit,” poor-spiritedness, and the like; any thing to get rid of them! They have to justify themselves to themselves, and so they miscall His love. Into what miseries or brutalities will they not plunge themselves, to avoid Him! Indifference is even harder to love, than passionate rejection, and more hopeless. For passionate rejection at least implies strong temptation, and when the temptation is worn out or disappoints, the soul may turn to Him. And yet He bears with it all, throughout all this vast number of human souls. How few yield to Him at first; how much fewer continually, perseveringly! How few are not wrecks of what they might have been, had they ever yielded to Him! And yet He did not come to us, a stranger from without. We were baptized into Him, with the Father and the Son. He was our Indweller. We became His temples.⁷ He was the Voice of Jesus to our souls. If the words of Jesus in the Gospel spake to us, it was He Who spake to us through them, and lighted them up and put the fire of His love into them, and made us susceptible of that Fire. It was He Who spake to our young hearts. Whether we perceived it or no, it was He Who warned us not to speak

⁵ Gen. i. 2.

⁶ St. John xv. 26.

⁷ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17, vi. 19, 2 Cor. vi. 16.

or listen to a bad word, to speak the truth, not to be curious, or whatever else He bade us.

If any chased Him away by deadly sin, He sought to be re-admitted. We did not seek Him, but He sought us. God became the Suppliant to us, that we would receive Him back again, that we would not remain untenanted by Him. And this He does continually with each individual soul. There is not a soul among the damned, to whom He has not said, "Listen to Me, and it shall be well with thee;" there is not a soul among them, who has not turned away and said, "I will not obey Thee!"

Then too He adapts Himself with all His Infinite Wisdom to each human soul. We count it, among created beings, a great token of love, if any one considers us and our case with any special care, if they expend thought upon us individually, if they contrive plans for our good, for the good developement of our mind or intellect. We have, many of us, a life-long gratitude for such thought and care, though he who showed it, has long been removed out of sight. Yet here it is not only one provision, but manifold; not for a time only, but hourly, all our lives through; not a human benefactor, who thinks of us now and then among many others, but the Omniscient Wisdom of God, Who, acting indivisibly as God, counsels for our souls with the whole fulness of His Wisdom. And as we have listened to it, amid whatever shortcomings, we have found by experience in our own case, what we must have known beforehand if we thought, that His counsel at each time was just what was needed for us—perhaps to save us from Hell. It was the undivided thought of God, counselling the very best thing for us individually, just what we needed, being exactly those beings which we are, with just that combination of gifts, qualities, endowments, failings, which, if they were good, God united in our particular soul; if bad, we made for ourselves.

These were His ways, more or less, with most of us, when God the Holy Ghost was imploring us in our childish clays, not to be drawn away by bad examples of others, or by the ridicule of the thoughtless, or, somewhat later, by human respect, or was drawing us to choose God above all created things to be our Portion here and for ever. This soliciting from without concerns us now too, in our character of suppliants for our unconverted fellow-sinners. Yet they are but the beginning of His ways. For they are mostly His entreaties to those who have become external to Himself, to come to Jesus, and to be reconciled to God. They are His calls to those who, by some grievous sin or continuity of sin, have chased Him from themselves, and have become again the property of the Evil one. They are the conditions of His working upon the soul, the vestibule of His presence, the passing "from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God."⁸ They signify His love for individual souls, in that He, like Jesus, will bear with any thing, sooner than part with them.

2. But His love can then first find scope to shew itself to the soul, when it has received Him. He shews His love, by giving Himself with His gifts. He could not become Incarnate; but He does what has its own special condescension of love. God the Son united to Himself a pure, deified, human nature; God the Holy Ghost comes, abidingly to dwell in each single soul, notwithstanding all its imperfections, weaknesses, venial sins: and He returns to it, when chased away by mortal sin, through contrition and the Sacrament of penitence. Some Sacraments are especially His own, as Baptism, Confirmation, Orders; in the Holy Eucharist He participates in the consecration. He operateth through our Blessed Lord's words of Consecration, to sanctify the oblations

⁸ Acts xxvi. 18.

presented to God,⁹ and makes them, by His Divine and spiritual Operation, in a real but ineffable way, “the Body and Blood of Christ.” He is ever ready to come, when the soul invites Him. We might make as many spiritual communions as we draw breaths. He would enter into our souls anew in every moment. He waits upon us, like a servant. We say to Him, “Come, and He cometh.”¹⁰ So great is His love to be with us, that He awaits only our wish that He should enter more into us. He knocks unto the door of our hearts by His Inspirations: He says, “Come to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled.”¹¹ “If any hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me.”¹² And what an entrance! The Creator comes anew into His creatures, not by any influence only, but substantially, Very God, to be Himself his Indweller and his Friend. Greater, more inward, fuller dwelling of God in the soul, they say, and nearer union with Jesus might come through a devout spiritual communion than through a tepid actual Communion. The Church has taught us to pray Him to come into our souls. Our Lord has promised to those who love Him and keep His commandments, “My Father will love him, and We will *come* unto him and make our abode with him.”¹³ And so the Church has learned and taught us the language; “Come, Holy Ghost, Who ever One art with the Father and the Son; Come, Holy Ghost, our souls possess, With Thy full flood of Holiness.” “Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire, And lighten with celestial fire: Thou the anointing Spirit art, Who dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart.” It was noted as a marvellous thing, when God heard the voice of Joshua, and sun and moon stood still.¹⁴ More marvellous is it, when the creature calls the Creator into himself, and He comes.

What words they are! What we believe of all, we must believe of ourselves, if we will. For He has said, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” He, Almighty God, He, the mutual Love of the Father and the Son, He Himself vouchsafes, not only to kindle the fire of love in our hearts which Jesus willed to have kindled, but Himself to be, within us, that Fire of love. How often we have heard the words, that we are “the temple of God!” But what do they mean? Not that God dwells in us, as by any created symbol, as He manifested Himself by a symbolic Presence in the Jewish temple of old; not that He should be within us only; but that He should interpenetrate the substance of our souls, that we should be united with God. Jesus becomes one with us, and we with Him through His Spirit Who dwelleth in us.

This He will do for each soul; but in so doing He adapts Himself to the needs, the character, the speciality of each soul. He gives to each soul the special and peculiar graces which it wants, over and above that “fire of love”¹⁵ which we all want. Our Lord said, “He shall take of Mine, and shew it unto you.”¹⁶ He gives us what the prophet foretold should be especially in Christ, those seven-fold gifts.¹⁷ In the Man Christ Jesus, He accustomed Himself to dwell anew in man, and then, what in Him was “without

⁹ “Come, to sanctify the oblations here presented, and those for whom, and by whom, and the things for which, they are offered.” Bp Andrewes’ Devotions.

¹⁰ St. Matt. viii. 9.

¹¹ Cant. v. 5.

¹² Rev. iii. 20.

¹³ St. John xiv. 23.

¹⁴ Jos. x. 14.

¹⁵ St. Luke xii. 49.

¹⁶ St. John xvi. 15.

¹⁷ Is. xi.

measure,”¹⁸ He gives to us in measure, as we can bear or as we can receive it. Still He gives us those same gifts which were in Christ. He gives to each of us a continual increase of grace, and with each increase of grace He dwells in the soul, not as before only, but with something more of Himself than we could before contain. Wonderful creation as grace is, almost unimaginable proximity to God, of that which is yet not God, still He is not content to give it without Himself. O glorious wondrous Spirit, Who hast all in Thee! All wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, dwell in Thee; and Thou impartest to each *that* of Thee which he can contain, and which is most needful and useful to him. Nay, not even these alone, but “Love,”¹⁹ which Thou Thyself art, and “Joy” which Thou hast in Thyself in the abundance of Thy love; and “Peace” from the tranquillity of Thine eternal oneness of joy; and “Long-suffering,” Thine own characteristic towards us; and “Meekness,” which was the special attribute of Jesus, that which He came to teach; and “Goodness,” which is Thine own quality, communicating Thyself to man.

This is, if one may so speak, the continual thoughtful operation of the Spirit. This is His creative work now; through this He, Whose special perfection it is to be the term and bound of Deity, is continually communicating the Trinity to all souls which will receive It. He comes closest to us of the Holy Trinity. Of Him we were born again;²⁰ “in the Spirit we live;”²¹ “we walk in the Spirit”;²² “by the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body;”²³ “by the unction from Himself He teacheth us all things;”²⁴ “He searcheth out all things, even the deep things of God;”²⁵ but for us; by Him “the love of God is emptied forth (so the word means) into our hearts;”²⁶ He vivifies us,²⁷ He purifies our hearts by faith;²⁸ by Him we have access to the Father;²⁹ through Him we become the habitation of God.³⁰ So closely is His presence inworked in our souls, that we often scarce know whether, when He is speaking in Holy Scripture of His operations, He means to speak of Himself the operator of the grace, or of the grace which He operateth.

But this is not enough for His love. We are taught to pray for His “holy inspiration,” that we may “think thereby those things which are good,” and that we “may perfectly love God.” And His inspirations are ever encompassing us, wasted alas! like the Blood of Jesus, but countless; always ending, if listened to, in some diminished unlikeness to God; coming to us the more, the more we listen to them; sometimes issuing in devoted vocations, sometimes in striking more towards the centre of “the narrow way,” sometimes in increased devotion to Himself and to all good, sometimes in greater jealousy of evil.

But He does not limit Himself to His operations in us. He too has an Office

¹⁸ St. John iii. 34.

¹⁹ Gal. v. 22.

²⁰ St. John iii. 5.

²¹ Gal. v. 25.

²² Ib. and 16.

²³ Rom. viii. 13.

²⁴ 1 St. John ii. 20.

²⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 10.

²⁶ Rom. v. 5.

²⁷ St. John vi. 63.

²⁸ Acts xv. 17.

²⁹ Eph. ii. 18.

³⁰ Ib. 22.

towards the Father. He too intercedeth for us, in us. He does not only “help our infirmities;” He does not only intensify our prayers: He does not only give us perseverance in prayer: He does not only teach us what to pray for, and is the life of our prayers. He Himself intercedeth for us. The prayers which we utter according to the Mind of God, the secret unspoken yearnings of the soul, He suggests, He inspires, He enables, He upbears. But also He Himself intercedeth for us. He Himself expresses within the Holy Trinity, the longings, which He has suggested: He uttereth them there with that Love which He Is; and we are heard, not only through the All-availing Intercession of our Divine Lord; but the Holy Ghost Who dwelleth in us, Himself is our Advocate in the Holy Trinity, and obtains what He wills and knows to be best for us. How should we be hopeless about our prayers, when they are no longer our prayers, but *His* prayers in us Who is Almighty God; His prayers, Who Himself utters our longings as His own?

Would that He may give us one special gift, and for this let us ask Him; that Spirit of Fire which He is, which shall burn out in us all which is alien from Him, all “wood, hay, stubble,” ere it be burned out at the great Day; which shall burn out of us all self and self-seeking, and make us count the good of others as if it were our own; which shall make us long for the glory of God purely, through whomsoever it is promoted; which shall refine all our dross, kindle what is cold, melt what is hard; which shall give us especially a burning zeal for the interests of Jesus and for the salvation of souls for whom Jesus died; which shall give us burning prayers, as knowing and feeling that, in praying for the salvation of a single soul, we pray for more than the whole world and its glories, more than the empire of the world, more than all possible inanimate creations. For we pray for one, formed in the image of God; for one, for whom Christ died; for one, on whom the good pleasure of the Holy Trinity rests; for one, whom the Father willeth to be saved, for whom the Son was incarnate, with whom the Holy Ghost has pleaded and will plead. O for hearts of fire, for fiery zeal for souls; that, if we can do no more, we may yet plead with God with burning longings, burning thoughts, burning desire for God’s glory in the salvation of that soul, that it may be God’s and God may be its own, and it may be to the praise of His love and longsuffering for ever!