

## OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST FOR THE SALVATION OF MAN.

*But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things.—John 14: 26.*

The holy feast of Pentecost, which we celebrate to-day as the third principal festival of the Ecclesiastical Year, is dedicated to the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, to “the Lord and life-giver, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who together with the Father and the Son is equally adored and glorified.”—*Symb. Nic.* Unspeakably great and varied are the graces which we owe to the Holy Ghost, for they relate to all things necessary for our purification and salvation. The Church recalls these to our mind to-day, and exhorts us to meditate on them and make the resolution from henceforth to employ them for our salvation with all possible fervor. In order to obey the invitation of the Church, we will make the operation of the Holy Ghost for the salvation of man the subject of our meditation, answering the three following questions:

*I. What part has the Holy Ghost taken in the work of our Redemption?*

*II. What did he do on the feast of Pentecost?*

*III. What will he continue to do until the end of the world?*

### PART I.

*What part has the Holy Ghost taken in the work of our Redemption?*

1. *He foretold the Redemption of man.* Immediately after the fall of our first parents, he announced the coming of a Redeemer, in these words: “I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.”—*Gen. 3: 15.* He foretold the Redeemer through the Patriarch Jacob: “The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent, and he shall be the expectation of nations.”—*Gen. 49: 10.* Through Isaias: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son; and his name shall be called Emmanuel.”—*7: 14.*

Through Micheas: AND THOU, BETHLEHEM EPHRATA, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity."—5: 2. By these and many other prophecies the Holy Ghost caused the belief in the coming Redeemer and the longing after him to be again and again awakened and preserved.

2. *He prepared the Blessed Virgin Mary for the dignity of the divine Maternity.* It is an article of the faith that Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin, for it was not becoming that she who was to bring forth the Holy of Holies, the Son of God and the Conqueror of Satan, should ever be defiled with sin and be the slave of Satan even for a moment. Mary was free not only from original sin, but also from every personal sin, even from the least fault; she possessed in the first moment of her conception a greater measure of sanctity than all angels and saints; she also practised in her life all virtues and attained in each of them the highest perfection. To whom does Mary owe all these prerogatives and graces? To the Holy Ghost, who applied to the treasures of his grace in order to render her worthy of becoming the Mother of God.

3. *He effected the Incarnation of Christ.* This wonderful mystery of our holy faith is expressed in the Sacred Scripture in clear and plain words. Thus the Archangel Gabriel says to the Blessed Virgin: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy Ghost which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—*Luke* 1: 35. In like manner the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, the virginal spouse of Mary: "Joseph, Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."—*Matt.* 1: 20. We say in the Apostles' creed: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," and this truth is brought before us in the first "Joyful Mystery" of the Rosary. By the power of the Holy Ghost, therefore, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, assumed human nature, that is, a human body and a human soul, and united it with his Divinity in one person, the Person of the Son of God. Now, since according to the decree of God Christ was to become man, in order to be able to suffer and die for us and thereby to redeem us, we owe our delivery from sin and eternal damnation also to the Holy Ghost, because it was he that accomplished the Incarnation of Christ and thereby enabled him to redeem us.

4. *Lastly, he assisted with his grace our divine Lord in everything that he, as man, has done for our Redemption.* When Christ was

baptized by St. John in the river Jordan, the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove, and came upon him to impart to him the plenitude of his graces.—*Matt.* 3: 16. He was led by the Spirit into the desert, before he began his public life, where he fasted forty days and forty nights and overcame the temptations of Satan.—*Matt.* 4: 1, *et seq.* Again, it was the Holy Ghost who, as Jesus himself assures us, anointed and sent him, “to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward.”—*Luke* 4: 18, 19. Urged and strengthened by the Holy Ghost, Christ offered himself to God as a clean oblation, dying for us on the cross.

From all this we perceive what part the Holy Ghost took in the work of our Redemption, and how much reason we have, in consideration of all that Christ has done for our Redemption, to think also of the Holy Ghost and to thank him for his gracious co-operation.

## PART II.

*What did the Holy Ghost do on the feast of Pentecost?*

1. He came in the shape of parted tongues, as it were, of fire, and sat upon the Apostles and other believers, and they received the plenitude of his graces, especially the gift of tongues. On this day the Apostles received not only the plenitude of sanctifying grace, but also the gifts which they needed in the exercise of their high calling. It was the Holy Ghost who taught the Apostles all truth (*John* 16: 13), and enabled them to preach the divine doctrine to the world in its entirety, pure and unadulterated; it was he who stripped the hearts of the Apostles of all weakness and human fear, and fortified them with courage and strength, that braving all obstacles and dangers, all difficulties and persecutions, they preached the gospel to Jews and Gentiles, and joyfully sacrificed their lives. It was he who changed them into new beings and filled their hearts with the most pure love of God and with indomitable zeal, so that they lived only for Christ and for their holy vocation; hence they could say with St. Paul: “With Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.”—*Gal.* 2: 19, 20. Moreover, the Holy Ghost imparted to the Apostles the gift of tongues, to enable them, in preaching the gospel, to make themselves understood by all the nations of the earth, which spoke many languages. He also imparted to them other miraculous gifts, such as power to cast out devils, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, as proofs of their divine mission. Thus it was reserved to the Holy

Ghost to render the apostles efficient preachers of the faith and dispensers of graces; without him they would not have been able to convert and gain a single soul, much less the whole world.

2. The Holy Ghost did still more on Pentecost. *He introduced the Church of Christ into the world.* Christ had already founded his Church, and the congregation assembled in the *Cœnaculum* at Jerusalem constituted it. But it was hidden, it was small, insignificant, for there were only one hundred and twenty souls, all told; they had space enough in a room. Moreover, Peter and the other Apostles did not yet possess those gifts which they needed for the profitable exercise of their office; they lacked especially the gift of wisdom and fortitude, to enable them to appear in public as preachers of the gospel; finally, the Holy Ghost, the spirit of truth, of comfort, of fortitude and sanctification, was wanting to the whole Church; it resembled a body without a soul, therefore a body without life, without motion or activity. But what a blessed change is wrought in the Church to-day! The Holy Ghost comes not only upon the Apostles but also upon all the believers assembled in the *Cœnaculum*, therefore upon the whole Church, and makes his permanent abode with her. The promise of Christ is accomplished: "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever."—*John* 14: 16. To-day the Holy Ghost imparts to Peter and the other Apostles those gifts which they need to rule the Church and to ordain whatever is required for the salvation of mankind; to-day the Holy Ghost manifests the existence of the Church to the world, for at the conclusion of St. Peter's first sermon three thousand Jews are converted to the Christian faith and become members of the Church. Pentecost therefore is a very important, blessed day; it is, as it were, the birthday of the Holy Catholic Church because on this day the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles and the believers and because he introduced her to-day into the world. Thanks be to the Holy Ghost for this wonderful grace now and for ever!

### PART III.

*What will the Holy Ghost continue to do until the end of the world?*

1. *He preserves, guides and rules the Church until the consummation of the world.* Christ, indeed, is the invisible head of the Church, and, as such, rules her in an invisible manner, but only through the Holy Ghost, who proceeds from him and the Father, and is sent by him, and who, consequently, is his Spirit. St. Augustine says: "What the soul is to the body of man, the Holy

Ghost is to the body of Christ, to the holy Church, for the Holy Ghost does in the Church what the soul does in the single members of the body—he enlivens, guides and rules her”. The Holy Ghost introduces the officers of the Church by consecration into their office and imparts to them the necessary graces and faculties for the administration of it. Therefore St. Paul exhorts the officers of the Church at Ephesus: “To take heed to themselves and to all the flock wherein the Holy Ghost has placed them bishops.” The Holy Ghost continually assists the teaching Church, so that in matters of faith and morals she cannot err, and everything she ordains and decrees is according to the will of God. Therefore, the Apostles assembled in council at Jerusalem declare: “It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things.”—*Acts* 15: 28. Because the Holy Ghost rules the Church, her officers, although frail men and sometimes leading disedifying lives, never make laws and ordinances which are in contradiction to the doctrine of Christ. There is not even a single instance in which the Pope has decreed or prescribed anything contrary to faith or morals and laid it down as an obligation upon the faithful. Whenever an error was broached it was rejected. The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, has never allowed at any time an error to creep into the sacred deposit of faith and morals, and never will. Finally, when we consider the Church in the light of history, and see her not only existing in the midst of countless persecutions from century to century, but spreading more and more among the nations of the earth, we must confess that it is the Holy Ghost that rules and protects her, and guards her against all her exterior and interior enemies.

2. *He sanctifies us.* Jesus Christ is our Redeemer; he has expiated our guilt and reconciled us with God. We owe it to his infinite merits that we are purified and sanctified. But, although Christ has merited for us the grace of sanctification, we are not yet, on that account, really sanctified. This grace must be applied to us. What profit to a thirsty man is a well which is closed up in the bowels of the earth, or to which he has not the strength to approach and drink of its water? He will die of thirst, no matter how pure and abundant the water may be. In like manner the merits of Christ profit us nothing, if there is no one to make them accessible to us, because by our own strength we cannot apply them to ourselves. In order to become partakers of the merits of Christ, we must believe, hope, love, repent of our sins, and truly amend our lives; but we cannot do these things by our natural strength. Now the Holy Ghost comes to our rescue; he awakens in us the desire for the grace of conversion, he supports us, that we may comply with all the conditions necessary for the application of the fruits of Redemption; and

lastly he imparts to us these fruits themselves by really purifying and sanctifying us. Hence the Apostle writes: "You are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God," whose purifying and sanctifying grace Christ has merited for you by his passion and death on the cross.—*I. Cor.* 6: 11.

The Holy Ghost effects our sanctification by the sacraments. In baptism he cleanses us from original sin, and also from all actual sin, he sanctifies us and makes us children of God and heirs of heaven. For this reason the Apostle calls baptism "the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost."—*Titus* 3: 5. In the Sacrament of Confirmation the Holy Ghost completes in us the baptismal grace, and makes us soldiers of Christ. He not only increases in us sanctifying grace but also enlightens us with his divine light, that we may discern the illusion of the world and the dangers to our salvation which threaten us; he fortifies us with supernatural strength that we may overcome all temptations and persevere in the state of grace. If we be so unfortunate as to lose the grace of God by mortal sin and to render ourselves guilty of eternal damnation, we have the Sacrament of Penance in which we obtain the remission of our sins and of the eternal punishment due to them. This grace again we owe to the Holy Ghost, for to him belongs the work of our sanctification not only in baptism, but also in penance; and priests forgive sins only in virtue of the Holy Ghost; wherefore Christ said to his Apostles: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." In the same manner the Holy Ghost operates in the other sacraments; it is always he that applies to us the merits of Christ for our purification and sanctification.

#### PERORATION.

From what has been said, it is evident how beneficent the Holy Ghost is, how charitably he is to us and how many and great graces he bestows upon us. He begins his holy and salutary work immediately after the fall of our first parents, inaugurates the work of our Redemption and is continually active till he has completed it. Scarcely has our Redeemer left the earth when the Holy Ghost comes down from heaven, imparts to the Apostles all the gifts and graces which they need for the discharge of their office, and introduces the Church into the world. He makes his permanent abode in the Church, protects, preserves, rules and guides her until the consummation of the world, and sanctifies in her and through her all men of all times. Oh, let us think to-day with a grateful heart of all these graces of the Holy

**Ghost and resolve to employ them with persevering fervor for our salvation! In conclusion, let us pray with the Church: O God, thou who on this day didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Ghost, grant us, by the same Spirit, to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his consolation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**