

## **The Bespoke Spirit Rev. Edwin Dill, ST**

### **A reflection on the intimately personal nature of the gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

*We are to have a personal love of God our Father, of his Son Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit who abides with us...  
We are to make the Holy Spirit better known and loved and loved. (Missionary Servant Rule of Life, 10 and 11)*

Even when the word *spirit* occurs with a small *s* in our Rule of Life and in the writings of Father Judge, it seems to be reaching for association with Divinity. For what are the *cenacle spirit*, a *gospel spirit*, an *apostolic spirit* or a *prayerful spirit* if they are not some manifestation of the God-within, animating us to live lives of zealous love for all humankind?

Most Catholics, if asked what for them is the sign of God's presence to the Church and to them personally, would, I suspect, point to the Eucharist. This sacramental and physical presence is a pervading reality – *and* symbol - of God's abiding love and power among them. But Eucharist *as presence* did not seem to be Jesus' institutional intention at the Last Supper.

He was very clear, when speaking of his impending departure, in assuring the gathered apostles that he would send the Holy Spirit "...to be with you always.... (He) will instruct you in everything and remind you of all that I told you." (John 14:16, 26) The Eucharist is given as *food and drink*, physically present to the one receiving as long as the species of bread remains, but the Holy Spirit is the *abiding and powerful presence* of God within the Church and within every baptized Christian. The Holy Spirit, to resort to computer lingo, is God-with-us "in real time." I wonder whether Jesus' closing words in giving us the Eucharist - "*Do this in memory of me*" – were referring not just to the memory of his life, death and (future) resurrection, but were also an exhortation to a constant mindfulness of the ever-abiding Spirit of God within. The gift of one and the promise of the other were, after all, given on the same occasion.

While every aspect of God's presence to us is personal, we can think of the Indwelling of The Holy Spirit as being even more personal than the Eucharist, much as our own "spirit" or soul is more personal to us than the food we eat. The Eucharist Presence within is transitory; the Presence of the Spirit of God is enduring and dynamic.

It is difficult, even with the most practiced religious imagination, to wrap our minds around the concept of God's individual care for us. Limited by the human experience of time-space restrictions, we easily slip into thinking of the Holy Spirit as some general commodity doled out of infinitude into small "pieces" of God's presence and power. Yet if anything is *bespoke*, tailored for each individual to the remotest corner of his being, it is God's presence within. He who made us, keeps us in his Providence, ("*O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with*

*all my ways.*” Psalm 139:1-3), he who loves us with the knowledge and love surpassing that of a loving parent (“*Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!*” Isaiah 49:15) - can this God abide with us in any way other than in a personal and intimate way that – stopping short of the unity of identity – defies comprehension?

When our Rule of Life urges us “...*to have a personal love of God our Father, of his Son Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit who abides with us,*” it is reminding us that whatever “personal-ness” we can muster in the love we have for God is only a barely discernible shadow of the love that God has for us shown in the ever-abiding Holy Spirit within.

Reflection Questions:

1. How aware am I, especially in times of prayer, of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?
2. Does my celebration of Eucharist prompt me to reflect on the other ways in which God is present in my life and ministry?
3. Does the Holy Spirit’s Indwelling – with me and with those to/with whom I minister – play a part in my apostolic work?