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THE FAMILY SPIRIT



THE CHURCH IS our mother, and for that we should rejoice. Moreover, Jesus Christ has given us His own mother, Mary, to be our mother, too. Praise God for that—because if He has given us His mother as our own, He will surely deny us nothing! It almost seems an understatement to say He has not left us orphans. His gifts surely surpass all of mankind's expectations for salvation.

Yet there is something penultimate in these gifts of motherhood. Great as they are, they point to a still greater gift that our Lord wants to give us. Like all the good things of creation and the people and events in the Bible, these instances of holy motherhood are *real*, and we experience them powerfully, but God intended them to direct us to something still greater, something more real, something heavenly, eternal, and divine. God intends for us to contemplate the biblical types and other

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creaturely images until we arrive at their uncreated origins. That, after all, is what creation is for, and that's what revelation is for. It's also what motherhood is for.

The Great Unknown

Through the ages, Christians have taken up the challenge presented by the motherhood of Mary and of the Church. Pondering these realities, many saints, fathers, doctors, popes, and theologians have concluded that “Mother Mary” and “Mother Church”—as well as human motherhood in general—provide vivid created analogies to the life and mission of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Their explorations can be fruitful for us as well because, for Christians today, the Person of the Spirit has proven the most elusive of the Blessed Trinity—so elusive that one modern saint, St. Josemaría Escrivá, called this divine Person “the Great Unknown.”

After all, when we approach the Father, we can relate to Him as to someone we know on earth, someone familiar—and familial. He is a father. In the same way, when we approach the Son, we can relate to Him as an elder brother, for that is how He revealed Himself. Again, our relationship is familiar and familial.

Yet how can we relate to the Holy Spirit? The theologian F. X. Durrwell put the problem this way: “We

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know what a father is, what a son is. But the Spirit of God is without a face. Its name, whether in Hebrew or Greek or Latin, means breath and it is also called fire, living water, the power of God, love—all impersonal names. . . . Nevertheless there was in history a moment when God gave his Spirit a face: in a woman whom he took up into the mystery of his Spirit.”

For Father Durrwell, then, the Blessed Virgin is a living icon of the Holy Spirit. Yet her resemblance is more than merely suggestive. She is overshadowed by the Spirit at the annunciation (Lk 1:35). She is the locus of the Spirit at the first Pentecost (Ac 1:14). One of the most renowned dogmatic theologians of the modern era, Father Matthias Scheeben, sketches for us the unique relationship of the Spirit, the Church, and the Virgin. Mary, he says, “was made a mother in a supernatural manner by the power of the . . . Holy Spirit.” Then, “through the Holy Spirit and with Him,” she “is the bond of love between the Father and His Son become man”—just as the Holy Spirit is “between the Father and the Son in the Godhead.” Modeled after Mary and animated by the Holy Spirit is the Church. The Church is, in and through the Holy Spirit, “the virginal mother of all those whom in the power of the Holy Spirit she presents to God the Father as His children,” all those whom she “incorporates in the incarnate Son as members of His mystical body.”

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In other words, just as the Spirit is the bond between the Father and Son in the Trinity, so both Mary and the Church represent that bond in salvation history. In Mary, in the Church, and in the Spirit, the members of the Church are made children of God, caught up in the life of the Trinity.

For St. Maximilian Kolbe, the martyr of Auschwitz, the key to the mystery is Mary's immaculate conception. By this singular grace, God rendered her sinless from the first moment of conception. Thus free from sin, she was always, in the words favored by the Christian east, *panagia*—that is, all-holy. Sinless throughout her life, Mary is the creature conformed most perfectly to the Holy Spirit. St. Maximilian says: "Mary accomplishes in all things the will of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in her." Though "Mary's nature and person are totally distinct from the nature and person of the Spirit," still "she is so intimately associated with the Spirit that our minds can't understand it." The earthly type is Mary; the heavenly model is the Spirit.

On the very day the Gestapo arrived to take St. Maximilian Kolbe to the Nazi death camp, he wrote a sentence that we can spend the rest of our lives contemplating: "The Holy Spirit is the uncreated Immaculate Conception." And those are the last words we have from his pen.

"The Holy Spirit is the uncreated Immaculate

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Conception.” This is the mature fruit of a saint’s lifetime of marian prayer and study. They provide a good beginning, or a new beginning, to our own.

Mothers at Work

Let us apply once more the principles of theology and economy. We come to know Who God is by what He does in creation, in salvation history, and in revelation. And just as we came to know *Who* the first two Persons are, as Father and Son, by *what* They do, so we learn about the Holy Spirit as well. We discover *Who* the Spirit is by *what* He does.

For instance, Jesus identifies the Spirit as the divine agent of our rebirth as God’s children in baptism: “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (Jn 3:5). Our supernatural birth and first bath are *what* the Holy Spirit does.

Likewise, Paul describes how our own “adoption as sons” is associated with the Holy Spirit, and the “groaning in travail” that accompanies “the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:22–23). The verb for “groaning” there is the same one used in the Greek Old Testament to describe the labor pains of Eve, the mother of all living (Gen 3:16). N. T. Wright sums up an interpretive tradition of Paul’s “labor” passage when he writes: “God is sharing, *by his Spirit*, in the groaning of creation and the

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groaning of the Church. But this image remains inescapably the Eve-image, the female one of giving birth.”

Motherhood is hardly limited to childbirth, and so the New Testament applies other maternal analogies to the workings of the Spirit. Paul and Peter both urge Christians, as “babes in Christ,” to “long for the pure spiritual milk” (1 Cor 3:1–3; 1 Pet 2:2). Likewise, the Spirit is the one who teaches us to walk and talk (“walk by the Spirit,” Gal 5:16; “pray in the Spirit,” Eph 6:18). Only with such instruction can the “fruit of the Spirit” mature (Gal 5:22). How fitting it is, too, that one of the first words the Spirit teaches God’s little ones is “Abba,” as Paul explains: “When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16). A bishop of the fifth century, Diadochus of Photike, said that the Spirit acts “like a mother teaching her own little baby to say ‘daddy,’ repeating that word along with the baby until it becomes so much the baby’s habit that it calls its daddy even in its sleep.”

The Heavenly Model

The Catholic biblical scholar André Feuillet concludes from the evidence in the Scriptures: “Indeed the Holy Spirit himself appears as endowed with a function that is in some sense maternal. A mother is primarily entrusted with the task of giving life by bringing forth children

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into the world. She is likewise entrusted, as we have remarked, with the task of raising her children and making mature human beings out of them . . . [W]e read in the Fourth Gospel: ‘It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh profits nothing’ (6:63). At baptism are not God’s children born of water and the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5)?”

Father Feuillet proceeds to apply these findings to the Blessed Virgin as well: “There is a certain connection between, on the one hand, the virginal maternity of Mary and the conception of the Son of God in her womb under the action of the Holy Spirit, and on the other hand the supernatural birth of Christians through the power of the same Holy Spirit.”

We know Who the Spirit is by what He does, and what the Spirit does is bridal and maternal, qualities we associate with Mary and with the Church. We must emphasize, however, that Mary and the Church derive these qualities from the Holy Spirit, and not vice versa. As Father Durrwell said, “Mary is the transposition onto the human scale of the Holy Spirit in its eternal action.”

It is in the Book of Revelation that we begin to see through the historical transposition to the eternal action. There, the bridal-maternal figures of the Church, the Blessed Virgin, and the Spirit blend and become almost indistinguishable from one another in a succession of bridal and maternal images. One of the four principal authors of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Father Jean Corbon, wrote: “In this light-filled silence in which the

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vision of the Church of the last times culminates, the angel seems to whisper to John the Theologian: ‘You have seen the Bride of the Lamb? You have seen the Spirit!’ ” Elsewhere, Father Corbon refers to the Holy Spirit as “the maternal envoy of the Father.”

What a mother does in the natural order, the Holy Spirit accomplishes in the supernatural order, in Mary and through the Church. What earthly mothers do finitely and inchoately, the Spirit accomplishes infinitely and perfectly. In sum, as our mothers gave us birth, so the Spirit gives us rebirth. As a mother feeds her children, so the Spirit feeds the children of God with spiritual milk. As a mother groans in labor, so the Spirit groans to give us life.

This does not mean that the Blessed Trinity, or the Holy Spirit in particular, is somehow engendered as feminine. The *Catechism* clearly states: “In no way is God in man’s image. He is neither man nor woman. God is pure spirit in which there is no place for the difference between the sexes. But the respective ‘perfections’ of man and woman reflect something of the infinite perfection of God: those of a mother and those of a father and husband” (no. 370).

Light from the East

The early Syriac Fathers are the great witnesses to this rich doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the most ancient of the Fathers of east Syria, St. Aphrahat the Sage,

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is a most eloquent theologian of the Holy Spirit. He speaks of the Holy Spirit's maternal role in baptism. When preaching to a group of celibate men, he speaks of their total commitment by saying, "As long as a man has not taken a wife, he loves and reveres God his Father and the Holy Spirit His mother." We hear in a homily attributed to St. Macarius that Adam, after his fall from grace, "no longer saw the true Father of the heavens, nor the benign good Mother the grace of the Spirit, nor the agreeable, desirable Brother, the Lord." In the Syriac rite of prebaptismal anointing, which is still used by both the Orthodox and Catholic churches, the Holy Spirit is even addressed as a mother: "Come, mother of the seven houses."

In Syriac as in Hebrew, the word for Spirit, *ruah*, is feminine, and so it ordinarily calls for a feminine pronoun. St. Aphrahat and his contemporaries—as well as later fathers, such as St. Ephrem—regularly observed this basic rule of grammatical consistency, though the practice dropped off after A.D. 400, probably because of doctrinal misunderstandings or abuses.

Yet the bridal-maternal understanding of the Holy Spirit was not something new with, or peculiar to, the Syriac Fathers. It was, most likely, a characteristically Jewish-Christian theology, which Semitic Christians tenaciously kept long after Christians in other places had given their faith a more thoroughly Greek renovation.

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This is the thesis of great modern scholars of ancient Christianity, such as Cardinal Jean Daniélou, Cardinal Yves Congar, and Father Louis Bouyer.

Speaking Words of Wisdom

Furthermore, for the early Jewish-Christians, the bridal-maternity of the Holy Spirit was simply a Christian reappraisal of their Jewish background. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish contemporary of Jesus and St. Paul, spoke of divine Wisdom as “the mother and nurse of the whole universe.” It was common for Jews of the time to view divine Wisdom as a person (or personification) distinct from Yahweh, and Christians often interpreted the Bible’s wisdom passages as referring to the Holy Spirit. It was a reasonable surmise. For example, in the Book of Wisdom, chapters 7–9, God’s Wisdom is referred to as “holy spirit,” and then described in terms that are strikingly *divine* (“all-powerful,” “all-knowing,” “overseeing all,” and “more mobile than any motion,” 7:22–23). And, since the Hebrew word for Wisdom, *hokmah*, is also feminine, Wisdom was addressed in bridal terms (“irresistible,” “more beautiful than the sun,” 7:22, 29).

For the author of the Book of Wisdom, identified in the text as Solomon, Wisdom was a most radiant mother: “The Spirit of wisdom came to me . . . I loved her . . . and I chose to have her . . . because her radiance never

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ceases. All good things came to me along with her . . . because wisdom leads them; but I did not know that she was their mother” (7:7, 10–12).

For Solomon, Wisdom is God’s Spirit, personified as eternal, maternal, and bridal. Indeed, Wisdom is the only object of the author’s passions: “I loved her and sought her from my youth, and I desired to take her for my bride, and I became enamored of her beauty” (8:2). As he grew older, Solomon’s desire for Wisdom only grew stronger: “Therefore I determined to take her to live with me, knowing that she would give me good counsel and encouragement in cares and grief” (8:9).

Nowhere else in Scripture do we find such an elaborate description of Wisdom. So what are we to make of this scriptural figure of Lady Wisdom? Dominican theologian Father Benedict Ashley points out that elsewhere the Scriptures apply the word “Wisdom” to God’s Law (see Sir 24) and to Jesus (see 1 Cor 1:24). “Yet more properly,” he concludes, “it is to the Third Person of the Trinity . . . who is Love, wise Love, that the Old Testament descriptions of a feminine Wisdom are applied.” And his conclusion seems very reasonable.

Solemn Benediction

More still may be implicit in other parts of the Old Testament, as even the ancient rabbis observed. We have

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mentioned the feminine gender of two Hebrew nouns, *ruah* and *hokmah*. To these we might add a third that, like the other two, appears often in the Old Testament as an image of God's Spirit: the *shekinah*, or glory cloud, that filled the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple.

Etymology doesn't usually make for good biblical theology; but these cases might be an exception. The great Dominican thomist Father Reginald Garrigou-LaGrange said: "Since 'Spirit'—in Hebrew, *Ruah*—is of the feminine gender, the motherly quality and marital loyalty of her justice, as the prerogative of a chaste and virginal wife, connote a vitalizing psychological slant to the action of the Holy Spirit of God."

More to the point, no less a biblical theologian than Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who later became Pope Benedict XVI) bids us pay close attention to the grammar of the ancients: "In both Hebrew and Greek, 'wisdom' is a feminine noun, and this is no empty grammatical phenomenon in antiquity's vivid awareness of language. 'Sophia,' a feminine noun, stands on that side of reality which is represented by the woman, by what is purely and simply feminine." He goes on to note that "Spirit," too, is feminine in Hebrew, and he concludes: "Because of the teaching about the Spirit, one can as it were practically have a presentiment of the primordial type of the feminine, in a mysterious, veiled manner, within God himself."

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Years later, the same man, as Pope Benedict, developed these ideas, again drawing from the truths that are implicit in Hebrew grammar. In the season of the Holy Spirit, the days following Pentecost in 2005, he meditated upon the biblical witness to the person and mission of the Holy Spirit. He spoke of compassion as “the divine grace that envelops and transfigures the faithful, while ‘love’ is expressed in the original Hebrew with the use of a characteristic term that refers to the maternal ‘womb’ of the Lord, even more merciful than that of a mother (cf. Is 49: 15).”

In saying this, Benedict spoke as a faithful successor to Pope John Paul II, who recognized “that motherhood of God to which Sacred Scripture often refers.”

Saintly Samples

As I mentioned earlier, the Syriac practice of referring to the Holy Spirit’s maternity, once common, faded beginning in the early fifth century. Yet the saints never stopped rediscovering the analogy and exploring its deeper truth, both in prayer and in preaching.

In the Middle Ages, the great mystic and doctor St. Catherine of Siena said: “The Holy Spirit becomes [for people who abandon themselves to Providence] a mother who feeds them from the breast of divine charity.” Similarly, Blessed Juliana of Norwich said, “The great power of the Trinity is our Father, the deep wis-

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dom our Mother, and the great love our Lord.” In the years of the Reformation, St. Francis de Sales repeatedly returned to the theme of God’s maternal care in his *Treatise on the Love of God*.

In the twentieth century, St. Josemaría Escrivá described God’s love as characteristically “paternal and maternal.” St. Edith Stein, another martyr of the Nazi concentration camps, asked whether in “womanhood devoted to the service of love, is there really a divine image? Indeed, yes. . . . Such love is properly the attribute of the Holy Spirit. Thus we can see the prototype of the feminine being in the Spirit of God poured over all creatures. It finds its perfect image in the purest Virgin who is the bride of God and mother of all mankind.”

Thus, with the words of a saint, we are back where we began this chapter. The Spirit and the Church converge most perfectly in the Mother of God. In the Western tradition Mary is often called the “archetype of the Church”; the Church on earth is ever striving to be what Mary has been since the first moment of her conception. The eastern tradition, on the other hand, refers to Mary as both an “icon of the Church” and an “icon of the Spirit.” An icon is more than a “picture”; it is a window onto a heavenly reality. It is the Blessed Virgin, then, who opens our view onto the eternal life of the Spirit—even as she manifests the Body to which the Spirit gives life: the Church. Mary’s maternity is mystically one with that of the Church and the Spirit.

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Still Our Father

We must raise a caution here. None of what the saints have said implies that we should now address God as “Mother.” Divine revelation does not call upon God by that name, and there are probably very good reasons why the title never gained widespread use among the fathers. To call God “Mother” on account of the Spirit would have the ironic effect of undermining one of the characteristic works of the Spirit. The Paraclete, after all, is the divine Person who teaches us to address God as “Abba, Father.”

Nor should we infer that there is gender within the Godhead. Rather, God created the human forms of physical gender and sexuality to be created reflections of the purely immaterial relations unique to each member of the Trinity. In the relations of the human family, the life of the Trinity is reflected more truly and fully than anywhere else in the natural order. In other words, the analogy of bridal motherhood is *relational* and *familial*, not *physical* or *sexual* (much less political). Thus, in the testimonies of the Scriptures and the saints, we will find no justification for goddess worship, no warrant for English speakers to begin calling God by feminine pronouns.

Once again: God is not feminine by nature. Nor is the Holy Spirit feminine. “God is not a human being” (Nm 23:19). He is a pure spirit, and as such He has neither sex

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nor gender. Nevertheless, the God Whom we call Father possesses all perfections within Himself and, as the *Catechism* makes clear, these include perfect motherhood. Elsewhere the *Catechism* affirms, furthermore, that “God’s parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood . . . God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: He is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard” (no. 239).

The Lutheran theologian Edward Engelbrecht summarized the matter in a wry and memorable way: “The gospel according to Matthew tells us that . . . Jesus cried out, ‘I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing’ (23:37). . . . To say that God shelters his people under his wings like a hen is not to say that God is female anymore than it is to say he is a chicken.”

Let Us Proceed

Father Scheeben saw clearly the value of the familial approach to the Trinity. In his magnum opus, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, he wrote:

As the mother is the bond of love between father and child, so in God the Holy Spirit is the bond of love be-

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tween the Father and the Son; and as she brings forth the child in unity of nature with the father by transmitting the nature from the father to the child, so the Holy Spirit manifests the unity of nature between the Father and the Son, not of course by transmitting the divine nature to the Son, but because He Himself is the fruit of the mutual unity and love.

Scheeben's account of the inner life of the Trinity is striking and seemingly original, and some would count this as a weakness. Critics might object that this familial understanding (or "social analogy") of the relations of the Trinity clashes with the traditional "psychological" analogy proposed by the two greatest lights of the Western theological tradition, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. That analogy is most simply and clearly summarized by the lay apologist Frank Sheed:

The First Person knows Himself; His act of knowing Himself produces an Idea, a Word; and this Idea, this Word, the perfect Image of Himself, is the Second Person. The First Person and the Second combine in an act of love—love of one another, love of the glory of the Godhead which is their own; and just as the act of knowing produces an Idea within the Divine Nature, the act of loving produces a state of Lovingness within the Divine Nature. Into this Lovingness, Father and Son pour all

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that they have and all that they are, with no diminution, nothing held back. Thus the Lovingness within the Godhead is utterly equal to the Father and the Son, for they have poured their all into it. . . . Thus their Lovingness too is Infinite, Eternal, Living, Someone, a Person, God.

There are two “processions” within the Trinity: the Father generates the Son, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The traditional model understands the first procession to be a matter of the mind of God, an “intellectual” procession of knowing, and the second procession to be a matter of the will of God, a “volitional” procession of loving. The second procession flows from the first, since one can only love what one knows.

How does this relate to family life? To know someone truly, and to love whom we know: this is the very essence of family life; it’s the essence of the Church’s life; and it’s the essence of God’s life.

In a fascinating meditation, one of the ancient Church Fathers, St. Methodius of Olympus, related that dual procession of the Holy Spirit to a primordial earthly analogue. He said that, as Eve processed from her Father God and from the side of His son Adam, so the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the eternal Son. As the Father made Eve from the rib of Adam, so

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Methodius called the Holy Spirit the “rib of the Word”—the uncreated principle of maternity. We can see in this ancient text an anticipation of St. Maximilian’s “uncreated immaculate conception,” especially since Eve was, like Mary, conceived sinless.

*Home Is Where the Heart Is
(and the Head)*

The processions might still seem remote to us. But, again, we can learn more of the eternal, divine life by examining what God does for us on earth. Consider, for example, the two dimensions of our salvation that St. Paul so emphasized: justification and sanctification. These represent two dimensions of our experience of God that correspond to the two eternal processions in God. We can look at salvation in legal terms, as justice, obedience, and keeping the Father’s law. We see our justification, then, as a work of the Son, the Logos—because it is a work understood in legal and rational terms. We may also, however, look upon our salvation in terms of sanctification—a free gift of love, a grace dispensed ordinarily through communal and sacramental worship. We can describe our sanctification, then, as a work of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier—and a work that is bridal-maternal in nature.

Knowledge and love are perfected eternally in one indivisible act. We see this divine reality expressed in creation—in salvation history, in the life of the Church, and

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in our own lives. We can't love what we don't know, but we can sometimes know in an unloving way. Law without love leaves us with coldhearted intellectualism. Love without law, on the other hand, is debased, degenerate.

Law is ordered to love, and love perfects the law. St. Paul tells us that "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor 8:1). Yet Paul is not advocating blissful ignorance, for he also urges us to "speak the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). We need both together, knowledge and love, in order to live in the image and likeness of the triune God. Thus, we need both together, knowledge and love, if we are to be fully human. Salvation, in the end, means becoming truly human, fulfilling the deepest needs of knowing and loving, which can only be satisfied in the Trinity.

This divine truth manifests itself in the New Covenant as in the Old—in the Church as in Israel—because, in both, the law is ordered to the liturgy. The law of Israel was ordered to ritual purity. For us today, canon law describes the boundary lines of our home, the holy city, the place of sacrifice and sacraments.

In the family, too, we can observe these principles at work (though here it is difficult to simplify without falling into stereotypes). Traditionally we identify fatherhood, the masculine principle, with law, logic, and objectivity. Motherhood we associate with love, wisdom, and profound subjective insight. Said Pope Pius XI: "If the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he

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occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love.”

Pairing It Down

With the two processions of the Trinity, we have associated a number of complementary pairs of terms. For example:

PROCESSION OF THE SON	PROCESSION OF THE SPIRIT
Knowing	Loving
Intellect	Will
Law	Liturgy
Justice	Holiness
Order of Authority	Order of Love
Husband/Father	Wife/Mother
Head	Heart

Though these terms should be distinguished from one another in thought, they are inseparable in Christian life. Yet, far too often, Christians try to isolate these realities—considering knowing apart from loving, the law apart from the liturgy, justice apart from holiness. It doesn’t work, and the project almost invariably ends by setting inseparable terms in diametric opposition. Their union originates in God, in the “eternal covenant.” And what Jesus said of another covenant applies just as well here: “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mt 19:6).

This theological truth has profound implications for everyday life. What begins in the Trinity, we live out in

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our unity of life—for persons, for family, for society. Everything God has made, including you and me, bears the image and likeness of the Trinity.

To be fully human, to be fully divinized, then, we need the *whole* Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We need to be justified *and* sanctified; we need the law, *and* we need love. We need to be fathered *and* mothered.

Life in the Spirit

Christ came to earth in order to give us the Spirit. He ascended to the Father so that the Spirit could descend on the Church. In these divine actions, salvation history manifested the divine processions. The Father sending the Son in history is an image of the Father generating the Son in eternity. The descent of the Spirit upon the Church at Pentecost is an image of the Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son in eternity.

So we must strive not to neglect or undervalue the Spirit's life in the Trinity, or our life in the Spirit. The Spirit's essential work is to reproduce Christ's life, suffering, death, and resurrection in each and all of us. If we neglect the Spirit, then we are neglecting Christ, too. "It is to your advantage that I go away," Jesus told the apostles, "for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. . . . When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:7, 13).

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This is a grace of the Spirit Himself, reserved for the very age in which we live. St. Gregory of Nazianzus said:

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of Himself. . . . By advancing and progressing “from glory to glory,” the light of the Trinity will shine in ever more brilliant rays.

When we recite the creed, we must first say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” before we can go on to say, “I believe in the holy Catholic Church.” The sequence is quite deliberate. For we cannot believe in the Church’s truth until we have life in the Spirit. We cannot fully give assent to Mother Church until we are living the fullness of that life in the Spirit.

When the Son returned to the Father, He did not leave us orphans. He sent us the eternal Spirit to live with us and within us. I firmly believe that we, today, need to cultivate our devotion to this “Third Person” until the Spirit is no longer in third place—until the Spirit is, for us, no longer the “Great Unknown.” This will require intensive study, but more intensive prayer. Only then, with our full experience of the two divine processions, will we be fully human, empowered to live out the triunity of God in our everyday lives—knowing and loving, justified and sanctified.

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Press, 1977). For a historical-linguistic treatment, see Sebastian Brock, “The Holy Spirit as Feminine in Early Syriac Literature,” in Janet Martin Soskice, ed., *After Eve* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), pp. 73–88. Also see Joseph Chalassery, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Initiation in the East Syrian Tradition* (Rome: Mar Thoma Yogam, 1995), p. 188: “In the East Syrian sources the motherhood of the Church was diminished due to the motherhood of the Holy Spirit. . . . Therefore, we can interpret the Church as the visible image of the motherhood of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power behind all the motherly actions of the Church.” Elsewhere he adds: “The Holy Spirit acts as mother in the life of Christians. . . . [I]n the rites of Christian Initiation, it is the Holy Spirit who gives birth to Christians in the Church through the womb of baptism” (pp. 233–34). Also see Susan Harvey, “Feminine Imagery for the Divine: The Holy Spirit, the Odes of Solomon, and Early Syriac Tradition,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 37 (1993): 111–39.

Page 160: “As long as a man has not.” St. Aphrahat, *Demonstrations* 18.10, quoted in Kaniyamparampil, p. 215.

Page 160: “a homily attributed to St. Macarius.” *Spiritual Homilies* 28.4, quoted in Cantalamessa, p. 14.

Page 160: “Come, mother of the seven houses.” Kaniyamparampil, op. cit., p. 99.

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Page 160: “the practice dropped off after A.D. 400” For possible reasons, see Brock, pp. 74f, and Canta-lamessa, p. 14.

Page 161: “This is the thesis of great modern.” See, for example, Yves M. J. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, vol. 3 (New York: Seabury, 1985), p. 155; idem, “The Spirit as God’s Femininity,” *Theology Digest* 30 (1082): 129–32. Also see Louis Bouyer, *The Seat of Wisdom* (New York: Pantheon, 1962), pp. 175ff; idem, *Cosmos: The World and the Glory of God* (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede’s, 1988), pp. 190ff; Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), pp. 134–40.

Page 161: “Speaking Words of Wisdom.” See Thomas P. McCreesh, O. P., “Wisdom as Wife,” *Revue Biblique* 92 (1985): 25–46. For a penetrating treatment of the key text, Wisdom 7–9, see J. L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom* Rev. Ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), p. 199: “A further step is taken in Wisdom of Solomon 7–9, one that is bold beyond belief. True, she is a personification, with its erotic overtones, which occur in reference to Solomon’s bride, Wisdom, but chapter 7 describes her as an extension of divine essence, a virtual if not actual hypostasis. Her twenty-one attributes add up to supreme purity, an emanation of the glory of the Almighty, and an image of divine goodness (7:22–26).

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Divine wisdom and spirit unite, and wisdom functions as a providential power at work in the life of the covenantal people.” A fascinating recent study is Alice M. Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2005).

Page 161: “the mother and nurse of the whole universe.” Philo, *On Drunkenness* 31.

Page 162: “Dominican theologian Father Benedict Ashley points out that.” Benedict Ashley, O. P., *Justice in the Church: Gender and Participation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), p. 116. Ashley adds: “Thus, although the Holy Spirit, as all the Divine Persons, is named as masculine, the church to which as its very soul the Spirit gives life is feminine and complements Christ as his Bride. Therefore, it is in the covenant relation of the church to Christ, in their union of love, that the Holy Spirit is especially revealed” (p. 117).

Page 162: “More still may be implicit.” See Michael Fishbane, *The Kiss of God: Spiritual and Mystical Death in Judaism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), pp. 107–8, 111–12.

Page 163: “Since ‘Spirit’—in Hebrew.” Reginald Garrigou-LaGrange, O. P., *The Theological Virtues: On Faith* (St. Louis: Herder, 1965), p. 370.

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Page 163: “In both Hebrew and Greek.” Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983), pp. 26–27. See also Cantalamessa, p. 14. Also see Barbara Albrecht, “Is There an Objective Type ‘Woman?’” in H. Moll, J. Ratzinger, et al. (eds.), *The Church and Women* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), p. 48: “Father Kentenich [founder of the Schoenstatt Movement], decades before the current debate . . . perceived in the Holy Spirit the deepest mysteries . . . of God and woman in each other. The Holy Spirit (not Mary) is the ‘feminine dimension of God,’ if one may use such language in a hypothesis not sufficiently refined. Mary is, in her graced humanity, the instrument of the Holy Spirit. . . .” See Louis Bouyer, *Women in the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1979), pp. 37–39; idem, *The Seat of Wisdom* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), pp. 175–90; Pablo Gadenz, “The Church as the Family of God,” in S. Hahn and L. Suprenant (eds.), *Catholic for a Reason* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road, 1998), pp. 73–75.

Page 164: “Years later, the same man.” Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience, Wednesday, June 8, 2005.

Page 164: “Pope John Paul II, who recognized.” Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Oriente Lumen*, n. 9.

Page 164: “Yet the saints never stopped rediscovering the analogy.” In discussing Trinitarian theology, we have

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to be extremely careful with analogy. Analogy is helpful and even necessary, because human beings naturally draw upon similarities in order to move from known to the unknown, or the better known to the lesser known. We need to do this, but when we do we always face the danger of reading human characteristics back into the Godhead. It is very difficult to specify why and how a theological analogy is real without confusing the divine and human modes. An analogy always involves both similarity and dissimilarity. In this case, the dissimilarity is infinitely greater than the similarity. By revelation alone, we know that the Father and the Son, whose relationship entails generation. There is no “mother” in this generation. So the generative relationship of the father to the Son excludes something that must exist in regard to human generation. Since the Holy Spirit, by doctrine, proceeds from the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit cannot stand, by relationship of analogy, as a human mother relates to a father and a son. Two considerations follow. First, if the analogy of bridal maternity in the eternal Godhead were ever authoritatively shown to be revealed, it still would not authorize us to address God as “our Mother,” any more than the revealed mystery of the Second Person’s eternal sonship allows us to address God as “our Son.” Second, the eternal personhood of the Holy Spirit, in any case, cannot be made to depend upon a creature, non matter how exalted (e.g., Mary is the spouse of the Holy Spirit), since that would imply absurd or impossible notions (viz. before Mary’s

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creation, the Trinity would have consisted of a Father, Son, and Holy Bachelor).

Page 164: “The Holy Spirit becomes.” St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogues* 141.

Page 164: “The great power of the Trinity.” Bl. Juliana of Norwich, *Showings* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 285.

Page 165: “paternal and maternal.” St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Furrow* (Manila: Sinag-Tala, no date), p. 76.

Page 165: “St. Edith Stein, another martyr.” St. Edith Stein, *Essays on Woman* (Washington, D.C.: ICS, 1987), vol. 2 of *Collected Works*, p. 191.

Page 166: “Still Our Father.” Some critics worry that this “bridal-maternity” thesis might appear to be an acquiescence to so-called feminist theologies. In fact, radical feminist theologians have rejected this approach to the Holy Spirit with considerable vigor and hostility. Consider the judgment of Catherine Mowry LaCugna: “At an earlier stage of Christian feminism there was some enthusiasm toward the recovery of Syriac materials that used feminine imagery for the Spirit. Wisdom, often associated with the Holy Spirit, is portrayed as a female personification of God. . . . However, the Spirit’s activities should not be

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stereotyped according to gender-determined roles for women. Further, a Trinity that is predominantly (two-thirds) male with one feminine dimension concedes that Father and Son are, or should be, imaged solely as masculine. Further, since according to a subordinationist trinitarian theology the Spirit is third, the association of feminine imagery solely with the Spirit would reinforce the subordination of women in church and society” (“God in Communion with Us: The Trinity,” in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* [San Francisco: Harper, 1993], p. 105). Radical feminists rightly perceived that the net effect of the bridal-maternal approach to the Holy Spirit spelled disaster for their cause—precisely because it reinforces the Church’s tradition in a variety of ways, but especially by reinforcing Marian doctrine and devotion.

Page 167: “God’s parental tenderness.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 239. Also see John S. Grabowski, “Theological Anthropology and Gender Since Vatican II: A Critical Appraisal of Recent Trends in Catholic Theology” (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 1991), p. 374. “To say that the Holy Spirit is the locus of feminine and maternal qualities within the Godhead is not to give the Spirit corporeality or sexuality any more than the paterity of the Father or the filiation of the Son gives them these characteristics. The Holy Spirit actualizes these qualities in a divine and spiritual way. Furthermore, since the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son but does not

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cause them in turn, there can be no misreading of the Trinitarian processions in pagan terms of sexual union or generation. The maintenance of the order of these Trinitarian processions equally excludes the pagan confusion of God with the world. . . . The Spirit may be immanent within the world leading humanity to Christ and through him to the Father, but neither the Spirit nor the other divine Persons are identified with the world. Rather, in their complete possession of the one divine nature the three divine Persons infinitely transcend the world even while being intimately related to it as cause and ground. More work is needed to examine the adequacy of such a description of the Holy Spirit in feminine terms. . . . [S]uch a view can be maintained only as a theological hypothesis in need of further refinement and research.”

Page 167: “The Lutheran theologian.” Edward Engelbrecht, “God’s Milk: An Orthodox Confession of the Eucharist,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7.4 (1999): 509–26.

Page 167: “As the mother is the bond.” Scheeben, *op. cit.*, 183.

Page 168: “The first Person knows Himself.” Frank Sheed, *Theology and Sanity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press,

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1993), p. 106. Some versions of the “social analogy” of the Trinity are advanced without adequate regard to the spiritual nature of the divine processions, which the “psychological analogy” is better equipped to safeguard; e.g., C. Plantinga, “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” in C. Plantinga and R. Feenstra (eds.), *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1989), pp. 21–47. A thoughtful critique is offered by B. Leftow, “Anti Social Trinitarianism,” in S. David et al. (eds.), *The Trinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 203–49.

Page 169: “In a fascinating meditation.” See Scheeben, p. 185: “As Eve can, in a figurative sense, be called simply the rib of Adam, since she was formed from the rib of Adam, St. Methodius goes so far as to assert that the Holy Spirit is the *costa Verbi*. . . . ‘By the rib,’ says St. Methodius, ‘we rightly understand the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth . . . quite properly called the rib of the Logos . . .’” (citing *Convivius decem virginum*, III. C.8; PG XVIII, 73). Also see Robert Murray, S.J., *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 318: “It is not said of Eve that she was Adam’s sister or his daughter, but that she came from him; likewise it is not to be said that the Spirit is a daughter or a sister, but that (she) is *from* God and consubstantial with him” (citing St. Ephrem, *Evangelium*

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Concordans 19,15; CSCO 137). Also see M. D. Torre, “St John Damascene and St Thomas Aquinas on the Eternal Procession of the Holy Spirit,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 38 (1994): 303–27; Deborah Belonick, “Father, Son, and Spirit—So What’s in a Name?” in Helen Hull Hitchcock (ed.), *The Politics of Prayer: Feminist Language and the Worship of God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 305: “The Fathers compared the procession of the Holy Spirit . . . with the ‘procession’ of Eve from Adam. Later, in the seventh century, Anastasius of Sinai wrote: ‘Eve, who proceeded from Adam, signifies the proceeding Person of the Holy Spirit. This is why God did not breathe in her the breath of life; she was already the type of the breathing and life of the Holy Spirit (*On the Image and Likeness*).’”

Page 170: “We can describe our sanctification.” See Antoine Nacheff, *Mary’s Pope: John Paul II, Mary, and the Church Since Vatican II* (Franklin, Wis.: Sheed & Ward, 2000), p. 103: “The Holy Spirit connects not only the motherhood of Mary at the Annunciation and her motherhood in the order of grace but also the virginal motherhood of God with the virginal motherhood of the Church. . . . That the Holy Spirit is the Divine Person who assures the continuity between the virginal motherhood of Mary and the virginal motherhood of the Church is a fact that has become a pattern in the Pneumatology of Pope John Paul II.”

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Pages 171: “If the man is the head.” Pope Pius XI, Encyclical *Casti Connubii* (*On Christian Marriage*) (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1930), p. 15. See John Grabowski, “Mutual Submission and Trinitarian Self-Giving,” *Angelicum* 74 (1997): pp. 504–5: “Hence as the Holy Spirit is the bond of love and communion within trinitarian life, so it can be suggested that women analogically reflect and embody the same qualities in nurturing and sustaining communion within marriage and the family.” Father Bertrand de Margerie, S.J., argued that the time had come for a fuller development of the family analogy: “The family analogy of the Trinity can be broken up into two aspects: the paternity–filiation aspect and the conjugal aspect. . . . It seems to us then that a great part of the difficulties that have for so long a time been urged against the explication of the conjugal dimension of the family analogy have disappeared today. We think the moment has come to deepen this analogy. . . . The inner logic of the New Testament does more than authorize such a conclusion. It demands it” (*Christian Trinity in History* [Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede’s, 1982], p. 287–88).

Page 174: “The Old Testament proclaimed.” St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Theological Orations* 5.26, quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 684.