
« LIVING WITH THE HEART » (3)



Referring to the teaching of Saint John Eudes whose 400th birthday we are celebrating this year, I want us to recall that Christian life consists in continuing to live the life of Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

SPIRIT OF JESUS

It is good to read what Saint John Eudes has to say about the Spirit. At times the word “Spirit” evokes the spirit of Jesus, and at other times it refers to the Holy Spirit. His writings as a whole refer to the Holy Spirit: the recent computerized analytical index of the complete works of St. John Eudes comprises close to 200 pages of references by him to the Holy Spirit. He pays great attention to the Holy Spirit who formed Jesus in Mary and in each and everyone of us.

The Holy Spirit shared in making us Christians since he formed in Mary's womb the one who is our Redeemer, our Ransomer and our Head. He animated Christ and guided him in all that he thought, said, did and suffered, even to sacrificing himself on the cross, to make us Christians. [...] Once Jesus had ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit came into the world to form and establish the Body of Christ which is the Church, and to apply to her the fruit of Christ's life and blood, of his passion and death. [...] Moreover, the Holy Spirit comes to us in Baptism to form Christ in us and incorporate us to him, to give us new birth and new life in him, to apply the effects of his blood and his death to us, to animate, inspire, heal and guide us in all we have to think about, say, do and suffer as true Christians for love of God. [...] What obligations we have to bless and love the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for having called us and raised us to the dignity of Christians! What kind of life must we lead? One that is all holy, divine and spiritual because our Lord tells us that « what is born of the Spirit is spirit » (Jn. 3:6). Oh divine Spirit, I give myself totally to you. Possess and guide me in all things and make me live as a child of God, a member of Christ, a being born of you and belonging to you which must be possessed, animated and guided by you. [Interior Colloquies, in Lectionary Proper to the Congregation of Jesus and Mary. Charlesbourg, Québec, 1989. Pp. 77-78]

A COVENANT, A CONTRACT

The texts I have just presented are meant to bring to mind the wonderful work done during the 2000-2001 pastoral year by parents, pastors and religious educators, to better prepare and celebrate the sacraments of Christian initiation. In new ways and certainly with new words and expressions, home- and parish-based religious education introduced our children to the basics of Christian living, to the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. I want to express my gratitude to those who gave so unstintingly of their time and energy to introduce others to the wonders of the Christian mystery. The same can be said concerning the forthcoming 2002 World Youth Days, a special opportunity for personal and community encounters with Jesus Christ. The WYD theme is *You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth*. Meetings of young believers from throughout the world, religious education, social commitment, and celebrations will be conducive, with the grace of God, to such a Christian experience. Saint John Eudes dedicated a good part of his life to presenting the wonders of baptism, through his preaching, conferences, and writings; he even composed a catechism for his parish missions. As a good Norman Frenchman, St. John Eudes described baptism as a wonderful covenant of the human being with God, a contract with the Father who undertakes to consider us

as he considers his Son, a contract with the Son who binds himself to consider, love and treat us as members of his body, bones of his bones, flesh of his flesh, and spirit of his spirit; a contract also with the Holy Spirit who undertakes to form Jesus in us as he once did in the womb of the Virgin Mary. If the Blessed Trinity has accepted this undertaking, we too, through our godparents, made a covenant with God through the baptismal contract: we offered, gave and dedicated ourselves to the divine Trinity with the obligation of renouncing Satan and all his works and attaching ourselves to Jesus in faith and love; in other words, we bound ourselves to live holy lives.

CALL TO HOLINESS

Harken to the Holy Spirit who tells you by the mouth of the Apostle: "It is God's will that you grow in holiness" (1 Thes. 4:3). You might say that this is well for those who live in cloisters and monasteries. To that my answer is that Religious must be holy and models of holiness because of their sacred profession and because they have all sorts of means to achieve holiness. But whoever is baptized is likewise obliged to be holy for many reasons. Holy, because of the name he bears: that of Christian which is most holy. Holy, because he is a child of him who is holiness itself and the source of all holiness. Holy, because through Baptism he received divine grace, a participation in the holiness of God, making all who are baptized and remain faithful to this holy grace "sharers in the divine nature" (2 P. 1:4). Holy, because through Baptism he is a member of a Head who is the Holy of holies, and of a most holy body, that is, a member of Jesus Christ and his mystical body, most holy Church. [The Admirable Heart, in Lectionary..., p. 98]

WHAT MUST WE DO?

And St. John Eudes continues by listing even more reasons for answering the call to holiness of life. He then concludes with the following:

You may ask how man, fragile, weak and miserable creature that he is, can be holy as God is holy. My answer is that although this is impossible in our human weakness, it is possible, even easy, with God's grace which he never refuses to those who are willing to ask for it. What must we do, then? Only one thing, and one that is most delightful. What, indeed, is easier and more delightful than to love? What is more pleasant than to love the one who is infinitely good, beautiful, perfect and lovable; the one who is all goodness, beauty and perfection, who never caused any harm, but rather an infinite amount of good; the one who is all heart, all charity, all love for you? Love the most good and lovable God and you will be holy. [Ibid., pp. 99-100]

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