



# **The Holy Spirit**

## **and His Varieties of Gifts**

*By Rev. George Mastrantonis*

## **Man's Desire**

### **for Spiritual Uplifting**

**M**an was created in the "image" and "likeness" of God. He was endowed with the power to progress on a free way, and to develop his personality in the countenance of God Himself. Originally God created and placed man in Paradise, where he was expected either to use his freedom rightly or to lose this privilege and corrupt his own nature. Man fell from the blissful state into a needy and sinful life where his nature, corrupted as it was, bequeathed this condition to subsequent generations. This is why man today still feels the burden of conscience which penetrates his being as a curse.

This condition of man's nature for centuries caused the human cry for a Liberator to regain for him the destiny intended for him at his creation. God Almighty foresaw the whole picture of human struggle on the one hand and the nostalgia for happiness on the other. The need for a spiritual life, which was given to man at the beginning, was constantly anticipated from the Liberator. When the time came, man's longing was fulfilled in the coming of the Person of Jesus Christ on earth. He was fulfilled in the coming of the Person of Jesus Christ on earth. He was the Messiah Whom rulers and prophets had long predicted. The prophecies predicted the coming of the Messiah though Whom and by Whom man would be saved. This prophecy came true in the Person of Christ. Although Christ preached three years in a small country under foreign political rule, where most of the rulers rejected Him, His Message was rooted in the hearts and activities of His Apostles, disciples and other followers.

## The Descent of the Holy Spirit on Apostles

**F**or centuries, from the beginning of the Christian Church just fifty days after the Resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit has continuously inspired the faithful members and granted them the spiritual prerequisites for salvation. The fiftieth day after the Resurrection of Christ, the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit made His official entrance into the Church. This took place *"When the day of Pentecost has come, they (the Apostles) were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (Acts 2:1-4). This miraculous event changed the attitude of the Apostles and others, who because of fear of arrest and punishment by the Jews were together in the "upper room."

This attitude of fear and doubt was reversed, turning into courage and the bold faith to preach to all people. These Apostles and their disciples immediately became heralds and preachers of the Gospel of Christ. Despite their belief that the Lord had risen from the dead and appeared to them, showing them the wounds of His hands, walking with the two to Emmaus and speaking to them often, the Apostles were fearful and unable of themselves to face the people and begin their commission. From the day of the arrest of Christ, the Apostles showed great weakness. They not only were unable to fight against the false accusations and slanders, but some also scattered and went into hiding. Even Peter, the pillar of the apostles, denied under oath that he even knew Christ.

Such was the condition of the Apostles and other disciples of Christ up to the day of Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit. All these weaknesses were foretold by Christ, especially on the day before His arrest. But what an abrupt change came over the Apostles and disciples on this day of Pentecost. Fear and doubt turned to courage

and strong faith. They recalled all that Christ had taught them; their conviction became deep and abiding. Their intention, spiritual power and attitude toward the killers of Christ was the substance of their steadfast preaching. How did the Apostles receive so abruptly this changing power? How did the Apostles receive strength and durability? This changing power came from the Holy Spirit. He recalled to their minds the inexhaustible, eternal source of the Wisdom of the Christian Message. This changing Power came upon the Apostles and disciples on the day of Pentecost with the descent of the Holy Spirit. It engulfed them *"like the rush of a mighty wind. . . And there appeared to them tongues as of fire. . . distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"* (vs. 2, 3,4). This changing Power transformed them into great heralds and preachers of the Word of God. The Apostles emerged boldly from their hiding place into the open to preach, teach, and heal everyone in the name of Christ, *"and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"* (v. 4).

## The Beginning of the Church

**O**n this very same day of Pentecost, when many peoples from all nations had gathered to celebrate the feast in Jerusalem, the Apostles began their divine commission, which was destined to change the world. The multitude of people, had heard the "sound" and *"They were bewildered, because each one heard them (the Apostles) speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered saying, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language'"* (vs. 6-8). It is very clear that the people recognized to their bewilderment the various languages being spoken and understood. Each one realized that he **understood** what was being said *"in his own native language"* (v. 8). The Apostles received this Power when *"they were all filled with the Holy Spirit"* (v. 4). Regardless of how the words of the Apostles were transmitted to the people, the miracle lies in the **power of the Holy Spirit** transforming the Apostles themselves from fear and doubt to the courage to go out openly to preach faith in Christ.

Apostle Peter *"lifted up his voice"* and addressed the multitudes. He spoke about the prophecy of Prophet Joel concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:12-21), and reminded them of the miracles, wonders, and signs performed by Christ, being Crucified and resurrected according *"to the plan and foreknowledge of God"* (v. 23). The people, upon hearing this from Peter, asked him and the other Apostles: *"Brethren, what shall we do?"* And Peter said to them, *'Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'"* (vs. 37-38). The words of Peter so moved the people that *"those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls"* (v. 41). *"And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved"* (v. 47). The Apostles were also given the power to heal the afflicted. Apostles Peter and John, while on their way to the temple, came upon a lame beggar. Peter said

to him: *"I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk'. And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking, and leaping and praising God"* (Acts 3:6-8).

This movement of the Apostles established the Church of Christ on this day of Pentecost, which is regarded as the birthday of the Christian Church. The Apostles became missionaries in their own land and abroad. The power of preaching and sanctifying was shared by other preachers and deacons, especially by Apostle Paul. The grace of the Holy Spirit was very obvious in gaining new leaders and adherents to this new movement. This Grace was the only armor that the Apostles and their disciples had when they came out of hiding to convert the multitudes to the Christian Faith. They were without weapons, fame, money or prestige, being persecuted by their own people as well as by peoples of other lands. The Holy Spirit continuously gave them energy and strength, His Grace, as divine instrument to gain victory in the name of God. This struggle during the first three centuries established the Church, whose solid foundation was laid in the blood of the Apostles, disciples and the people themselves. It was the Holy Spirit Whom the Father and the Son had sent to protect the Church and guide man's salvation.

## God the Holy Spirit

**T**he Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, of the same essence and equal rank as the Father and the Son. *"And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth. There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree"* (1 John 5:7-8). The Holy Spirit as God is revealed in many verses in scripture: *"Why has Satan filled your hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit. . . you have not lied to men, but to God"* (Acts 5:3-4); also *"there are varieties of gift, but the same Spirit . . . the same Lord. . . it is the same God"* (1 Corinthians 12:5, cf. Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). The Godhead of the Holy Spirit comes directly from the Father. As the Son is begotten by the Father, the Holy Spirit also is proceeded from the Father, for *"When the Counselor (the Holy Spirit) comes, whom I (Christ) shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me"* (John 15:26). The Church has proclaimed this truth that the Holy Spirit is of the same substance with the Father and the Son in the Godhead of the Trinity. The Church has incorporated this truth in the Nicene Creed as pronounced by the Second Ecumenical Synod (381). It states "And (I believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the prophets."

The Holy Spirit in truth remains in the Church, protects and preserves its Truths and sanctifies its members. The Holy Spirit is the Power and Comforter of the believers, and was promised by Christ. Being the third Person of the Holy Trinity does not mean He is not equal in substance with the Father and Son. The Spirit is the life-giving energy and power which makes the Church *"the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1

Timothy 3:15). The Holy Spirit was the divine instrument in the birth of Jesus Christ as God-Man. *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you (Virgin Mary), and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God"* (Luke 1:35).

The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible and the Source of inspiration for its writers through those years. This is why the Bible although it was written by different persons and in different eras over the span of 1000 years, is coherent and consistent in substance and meaning. This is a remarkable and overwhelming fact. There is no other literature in the world which has this outstanding coherence, while written over such a period of time and by different writers. What was prophesied in the Old Testament, dating back hundreds of years, was fulfilled in time, and in detail, in the New Testament. This is an extraordinary phenomenon. This coherence of the Old with the New was an evolutionary process in the course of time between the divine promise and its realization. This was not because of any change of the Truth as such, but because of its development for human acceptance, for *"when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son. . . God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts"* (Galatians 4:4-6).

The Holy Spirit throughout the centuries revealed the divine Truths and inspired chosen Prophets and Apostles to spread and proclaim them to all peoples of the inhabited earth. It was in the Design of Almighty God that chosen personalities were indispensable in teaching and preaching these Truth to "all nations." These chosen personalities did not proclaim their own ideas or philosophies, but personalities did not proclaim their own ideas of philosophies, but only used their own abilities, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to serve The Will of God. These chosen personalities proved themselves outstanding co-workers of God. The Prophets, Apostles and all chosen personalities considered themselves instruments of the Holy Spirit, and they spoke with authority, as Christ said to the Apostles: *"Receive the Holy Spirit"* (John 20:22). The "gift" of the Holy Spirit is not a static one, but a transforming and sanctifying power leading the chosen one to accomplish the Will of God. Chosen personalities are exhorted to *"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has make you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord"* (Acts 20:28). This "gift" of the Holy Spirit is given to both the clergy and laity who belong to the true Church.

## **The Gifts of the Holy Spirit**

**T**he Christian should be informed of the various gifts given him by God. Gifts are given only to those who believe in the true faith, and not to those who have gone astray by interpreting on their own or to those who believe in superstitions. There is no neutrality in matters of belief; either one believes in the "True God" or in his own man-made gods, such as astrology, fortune telling, witchcraft, greediness, etc., all as objects of worship (cf. John 17:3). The difference between the belief in the True God and in

others is the acceptance of the gift of the Holy Spirit. For *"No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit"* (1 Cor. 12:3). The acceptance of Christ as the Savior through confession in Christ as the True God is the highest gift given to the believer by the Holy Spirit. If one does not wish to accept this gift, he does not allow himself to understand the reality of the True God as opposed to his own ideas. This acceptance is his own choice though his own free will. This is why one is responsible for his own fate. As a result, those who believe in superstitions are enslaved in thoughts and feelings by their choice. Their preoccupation with superstitions, astrology, etc. does not permit them to accept the True God. This is true slavery of the mind. If one opens his mind and heart to accept the gift of the Holy Spirit in the belief in the True God, he will realize a great difference in himself, having peace of mind and harmony of living which bring about a living faith.

*"There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit,"* (1 Cor. 12:4). It is the Holy Spirit from Whom every gift is given with certain abilities and understanding. The faithful one is called to undertake the responsibility of gifts or *charismata* which are bestowed on him. *"And there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone"* (vs. 4-6). In addition to the *"varieties of gifts"* of faith, there are the *"varieties of service"* by which the faithful one serves his fellow man with love and almsgiving. The one who receives the gifts of "service" consider himself a steward of the Lord. He devotes all his abilities with love in the service of God's commandments. The "varieties" of "service" in everyday life include: medicine, hospital care, nursing, social work, care for the elderly, teaching, missionary work, honest government and in general all services which deal in helping others when done in the name of the "same Lord." The "varieties of working" are the results of the energies and the actions of the "varieties of service." They are the wonderful results which come either in the everyday life of the people of in the spiritual world, when done in the name of the "same God." The varieties of gifts of service and of working, *"All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills"* (v. 11).

*"To each (person) is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good"* (v. 7). Each person is given the energy, charisma and grace to work for the common interest of the people. The successful achievements of this "service" and "working" should be attributed to one and the same power  $\frac{3}{4}$  the Holy Spirit  $\frac{3}{4}$  Who bestows them. These "varieties," although separate, contribute to the same goal  $\frac{3}{4}$  the helping one another  $\frac{3}{4}$  and depend upon the same authority, the Holy Spirit, the Lord and God. These are not varieties for destruction, but energies of unification in the service of the Will of God. They are fruits coming from the same root  $\frac{3}{4}$  the inspiration of God Himself.

The "varieties of gifts" are many: *"To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills"* (vs. 8-11). The gift of the "utterance of wisdom" means the deeper understanding of the will of God and mysteries of salvation; the "utterance of knowledge" means the good sense of knowledge; "faith"

means the supernatural achievements through the Spirit; "healing" means the ability to heal various sicknesses; "working of miracles" means supernatural achievements; "prophecy" means the miracle in the form of preaching; "ability to distinguish between spirits" means being able to distinguish between good and evil spirits by which various spiritual expressions exist; "various kinds of tongues" means the gift of speaking in many dialects of which the meaning is known only to him who speaks them, not even an interpreter; "interpretation of tongues" means the ability to interpret the language of the speaker of "tongues" to the people who do not understand what is being said.

## Speaking in and Interpretation of Tongues

**T**he gift of "*interpretation of tongues*" was needed because the "*speaker of tongues*," the glossolalist, was not understood by the people. "*Glossolalia*" is the original Greek word meaning "tongue" (*glossa*) and "talking" (*lalia*); it implies the faculty of speaking with tongues (languages). This Greek word "glossolalia" as a term came into use during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although in the New Testament era "*speaking in tongues*" was a common phenomenon. This practice of speaking in languages and dialects is recorded in two places in the New Testament, Acts chapter 2 and 1 Corinthians chapter 14. Glossolalia in these two passages meant utterances expressed by individuals to God in exotic manner, but **in human speech**. When a language was unknown to the people, an interpreter was used. However, many who used this glossolalia spoke in unfamiliar tongues, and those who heard did not understand or benefit from what was said.

Apostle Paul speaks to the Corinthians concerning the "*speaking in tongues*." He said: "*One who speaks in a tongue (foreign language or dialect) speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit*" (1 Cor. 14:2). Paul compares the utterances of the speaker of tongues with prophesy (preaching) and he supports the validity of prophesy because: "*He who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation*" (v. 3). Paul stresses the point that the learning of the teachings of Christianity is first and foremost for the believer; this is the primary mission of the Church. Therefore, those who speak in foreign languages which are unknown to the people are not serving the church but themselves. Paul says: "*He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies (preaches) edifies the church*" (v. 4). Paul makes the comparison between speaking in tongues and preaching: "*He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues*" (v. 5).

It is clear here by Paul's explanation that speaking in tongues without an **interpreter has no value** for the people 3/4 the Church. Paul emphasizes this point by saying: "*If I come to you speaking in tongues, how shall I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophesy or teaching?*" (v. 6). Apostle Paul concludes his admonition: "*If you in a tongue utter speech that is not intelligible, how will any one*

*know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air... But if I do not know the meaning of the languages, I shall be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me" (vs. 9, 11). As it is with teaching it is also with prayer, which **must be understood** by the people. Otherwise the speaking of prayers in tongues is in vain. "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful" (v. 14). Therefore, "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also" (v. 15). The same applies to singing and to blessings. "Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how can any one in the position of an outsider (without gifts) say the 'Amen' to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? For you may give thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified" (vs. 16-17).*

Apostle Paul discourages the practice of "*speaking in tongues*" inasmuch as the people do not benefit, for "*in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue*" (v. 19). Paul makes himself clear as being against "*speaking in tongues*": "*Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers. . . . If, therefore, the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders of unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?*" (v. 22). If there are speakers in tongues without one to interpret, "*Let each one of them keep silent in the church and speak to himself and to God*" (v. 28). Paul does not oppose the practice of "*speaking in tongues*" provided that the language of the speaker can be made known by the people either by using the languages understood or using an interpret to convey the meaning to the people. For Paul, religious instruction of the people is the most important work of the church. "*For you can all prophesy (preach) one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged*" (v. 31).

The varieties of gifts mentioned here, as well as those in Romans (12:6-8), "*are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills*" (1 Cor. 12:11). All these "varieties of gifts" are interlocked and equal, coming from the same Source 3/4 the Holy Spirit.

## **The Glossolalia Movement of Today**

**T**he "speaking in tongues" in the New Testament as described above is far different from the new glossolalia, tongues movement, of today. Although the word, glossolalia, is a term which was lately adopted, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the phenomenon of speaking is very ancient, as mentioned before. The difference is that in the past, and especially in the Bible, the speaking in tongues was the speaking of a **human foreign language**, which could be understood directly or through an interpreter. Glossolalia today has another meaning entirely, nor should it be associated with the Pentecostal Church, either. This new movement of glossolalia of today started in 1960 with an Episcopal priest in California. This movement has flourished, but not without opposition. The point of this movement of glossolalia is that the "tongues" are **not** human languages,



but **inarticulated speech**. All agree that from a linguistic point, glossolalia is **not** a human language, for one cannot identify any positive language being spoken, and there is no evidence that the glossolalia contains actual speech. Despite the claim of the members of this movement, they cannot provide any case to stand up under scientific investigation.

There is an explicit difference between real human languages and the glossolalia of today. The "interpretation" of the various utterances of glossolalia is not the same for all speaking it; there is no similarity whatsoever between interpretation given. Thus, from a linguistic point of view and through scientific scrutiny, the result is that glossolalia does not involve a real human language. Close examination of this new movement reveals that it has attracted many troubled people who display increased anxiety and instability. Their **frenzied** actions indicate they lose some of their mental self-control, resulting in a turning of their minds to something beyond their control. Studies of this new movement of glossolalia also indicate that the persons involved are seeking a different religious experience, for they are not finding satisfaction in their churches. This may explain the sudden interest in and growth of the glossolalia.

Many people are turning to this glossolalia movement, **mystic cults, oriental philosophies, witchcraft, astrology**, etc., because they do not find inner satisfaction in the material wealth of our affluent society. This dissatisfaction is partly due to the materialism and technological advances of this present century. It is obvious that material possession cannot satisfy the spirit of many people. People today need an "awakening spirit." But the Church seems unable to provide this, because the Church itself is not involved with materialism. People today are turning to diverting mystical movements and drugs to get beyond themselves in search of inner satisfaction and contentment. The actions of today's society clearly reflect the lack of spiritual values, and indicate the need to return to the true concepts of Christianity. It is a sad situation that even though more and more people are dissatisfied with material wealth and possessions and are turning to the various **cult movements**, society strives for even greater materialism.

The more materialism, the more dissatisfaction and unhappiness. The more unhappiness, the greater the exodus to the occult world. The loud cry from growing numbers of people is a sound that must be listened to by all segments of society, especially by the Christian Church. The question that must be asked is whether or not these people who are turning to the occult - especially the glossolalia movement 3/4 are really finding the spiritual satisfaction they are seeking. Examinations of these movements clearly indicate that the people who seek spiritual reawakening through them fail in the long run to realize their quest of the fountain of spiritual life and its inner satisfaction. Studies reveal that the people are turning to this glossolalia movement because they are looking for a new religious experience. The desire for these searching people ought to be satisfied in the Church of Christ. Since the Church is the people themselves (the *Ecclesia*), it depends upon their attitudes and activities to indicate whether or not the "established Church" is fulfilling their needs.

The "movement" for the reawakening of the spiritual life of the people should start within the Church itself, both by leaders and people. There is no true "satisfaction" outside the Church. It is easier to renovate spiritual methods within the Church than

to create new, far-out movements which as the past has already shown, in the end fail anyway. This is a lesson of the past, for these movements are not new, but date back thousands of years. This is why Apostle Paul puts prophecy 3/4 the preaching and teaching of the Church 3/4 above the "speaking in tongues," saying: "*He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues. . . so that the church may be edified*" (1 Cor. 14:5). Paul clearly indicates that the people who seek spiritual uplifting should not find it outside the Church "*since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church*" (v. 12). This is the answer for those who leave the Church, rather than the present glossolalia movements, or others. What is needed today to overcome this dissatisfaction of many people is the reawakening and strengthening of the spirit, something that is needed in the Church as well.

## **Invocation of the Holy Spirit**

**T**he Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, Who proceeds from the Father, is He Who spoke through the prophets and was the Divine Instrument in the birth of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible; He guides and protects the Church of Christ, having given it life on the day of Pentecost. It is the Holy Spirit Who endows the members of the Church with varieties of spiritual gifts for their illumination and satisfaction. This is why the Christian invokes in times of joy and in times of sorrow the Holy Spirit to strengthen his faith with His Grace to accomplish his purpose in life. The faithful member of the Church humbly should pray that he will not be led astray by "movements" outside the Church, where there is no salvation. The dire need of the people today is that they be reawakened to the realization that they already possess the greatest spiritual gift they can be given 3/4 their Christian faith. The Christian must dedicate himself to the true meaning and practice of his faith in God, and not allow himself astray in moments of weakness. The Holy Spirit bestows gifts only on those who believe in and practice the true faith. The Christian is admonished to "*Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance.*"

