VOCATIONAL
DISCERNMENT

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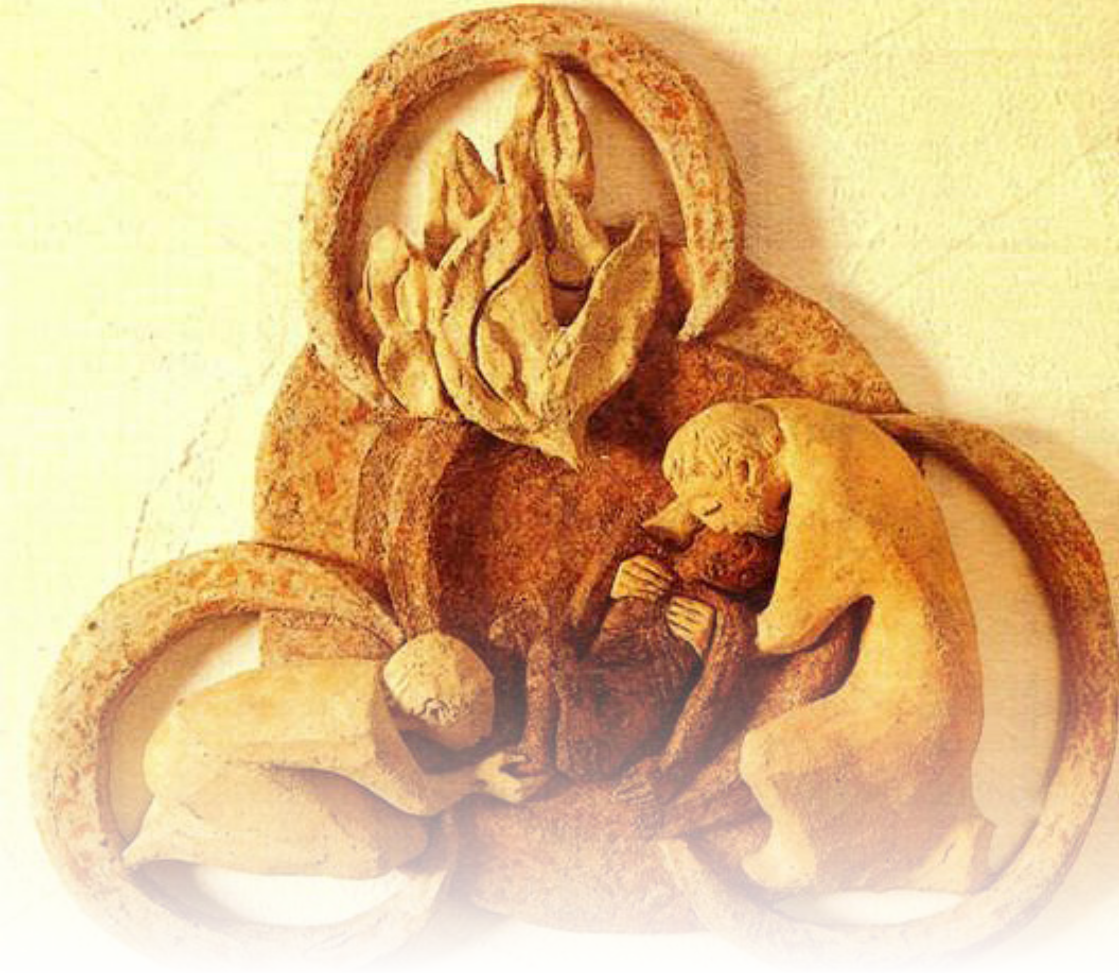


TOPIC 9

AGENTS INVOLVED IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

METHODOLOGY

Guide to study the texts personally:

1. Read the text and underline the ideas you want to highlight or the doubts that arise. Take note of them.
2. Bring to prayer the underlined ideas that you would highlight and the doubts about the text. Explain what calls you feel God is making to you for your daily life.
3. What commitment emerges from these calls? How can you bring them to life? Where do you find resistance?

Presentation of the questions worked on to the person in charge of the formation process.

AGENTS INVOLVED IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

It is pointed out that the subject or person is not alone in his desire and determination to configure himself with who is the Form and to grow in formositas, in beauty. Configuration implies letting oneself be configured.

In this chapter we consider the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as the first principles of such a spiritual process. They are absolutely transcendent principles, but not in the sense of being spatially distant, since God is present in everything by essence (he is the reason for being of everything), presence (everything is manifest to him) and power (everything is under his dominion); it is transcendent in things, in persons, in creation, so that it is immanent in everything. It is transcendent because it is absolutely absolute. But the Transcendent takes on a new form of presence through his revelation and self-giving in history; these culminate in the redemptive manifestation and surrender of the Son, who assumed the human form and condition. We then present other agents: the Church, Mary and the subject or person who lives the process of configuration. Finally, we allude to the Adversary.

I. The Father

We are not interested here in the historical genesis of the symbol "Father" referring to God; nor do we intend to make a sketch of systematic theology about God the Father[1]. We contemplate Him in the relation which the believer says to Him in his spiritual life.

1. Ver, p.ej., Fr.-X. DURRWELL, Our Father. God in His Mystery (Salamanca, Follow Me, 1990).

1. The Father, absolute principle. The Father is, in the eternal divine mystery, the absolute and beginningless Principle. He is the principle of the One who is the Form (the Son, whom He begets in the Trinitarian life) and of the One who is the Force or the Gift (the Spirit, which proceeds from both). In salvation history, he is the giver who gives us Form and Gift, the giver of the living way and of the guide; it is the Mystery of benevolence and grace manifested in the living Form that is Christ and welcomed in the reconciler who is the Spirit.

2. The Father, personal reality. God is not an impersonal force in the style of the Fate of the ancients or the sacred universal energy of contemporary cosmic mystics; he is not a blind vital impulse that would congeal into different living forms, although without being fulfilled or resting definitively in any of them. It is a personal reality, although it transcends the way in which the title of person is realized in us. Unlike the Aristotelian God and, we suppose, the God of deism, he knows and loves each of our personal realities. Each one of us is a hapax, that is, an unrepeatable word spoken by God. Only from this affirmation of God's knowledge and love for each and every one can we understand fundamental realities of religious existence: in particular, only if God is affirmed as a personal reality who knows and loves us can we speak of divine providence and contemplate one's life as guided by God or by his Spirit. Only if God is conceived as capable of entering into a relationship with our personal realities can we understand the decisive notion of vocation, handled in different registers: the vocation of the whole People of God and of each Christian to holiness, a vocation to a state or form of life, a vocation to a mission. Only from this affirmation of the personal God do it make sense to speak of God's commandments, of the search for and discernment of God's will at the cross-

roads of personal and community life, of the inspirations of God or of his Spirit. Only from this affirmation does prayer itself make sense.

3. Agape. As is hinted at in the previous number, in his self-revelation in Christ, God has manifested himself as agape or overflowing love (1 Jn 4:8, 16). This means, for the first time, that God is not a "transcendent Egoism that cannot love or will anything other than Himself" (Laberthonnière). In the face of such a typification of God, it would be necessary to launch an "every man for himself" and to avoid as far as possible any form of contact with him; that is, all theological life would have to be renounced. Understanding God as agape also implies affirming that he has no need at all: neither the world nor any of our persons exist to satisfy any lack that he may suffer. Creatures are not means that He uses to achieve His enigmatic ends or resources that He uses to tell Himself and thus become fully aware of His reality and the richness of being that inhabits Him. Saint Irenaeus said: "God fashioned Adam, not because he had any need of man, but because he had someone in whom to deposit his benefits".[2]

Every personal reality is willed for its own sake, it is the terminus of God's love, not a mere place of passage. God, as love, is self-communication, grace, gift of self, maximum affirmative power that makes the being and promotes the being of the other, unconditional acceptance. Through the Son and in the Spirit he communicates his life to us. If he places in us a desire for growth in communion with him and for advancement in life-according to the Spirit, it is because he wants to make himself as participable as possible and as possible as possible. It is the Being of our being, the Life of our life, the Light of our light, the Force of our strength. That is why we call him Father!

2. SAN IRENEO, Adversus haereses, IV, 14, 1 (París, Cerf, 1969). Col. "Sources Chrétiennes": t. 100, p. 538.

Love is modulated in many ways, both in God's relationship with his people and in the relationship with people who live a theological story: affirmation, gift, tenderness, mercy, redemption and forgiveness, consolation, command, encouragement, correction...

4. The Father, author of the saving economy or dispensation. The Father, who is principle without beginning, does not live subject to any law, to any economy, to any design superior to himself; on the contrary, he is the principle of the salvific dispensation, of all the dispensations of which Christian theology speaks. The modalism of Sabellius presented God without internal distinction of persons and adopting a threefold form of manifestation: as Father in creation, as Son in redemption, as Spirit in the final dispensation. The Patripasians also professed a subjection of the Father to the regime of the economy. Orthodoxy will clearly distinguish between the Father and the Son: it is the Son who enters into such a regime and who surrenders to the will of the Father (Jn, Phil, Heb, etc.).

5. Eternal life consists in knowing and loving the Father (Jn 17:3). Therefore, the supplication of every spiritual man will be: Noverim Te ("that I may know you") and Diligam Te ("that I may love you"). Faith and charity, at their root, are participation in God's self-knowledge and self-affirmation. We can declare ourselves indifferent to the offer he makes to us to have a part in his life; but this is a constitutive determination of man: it is referred to God, to the Mystery of God, to the absolute future that is God. "There is only one ultimate vocation of man: the divine [theological vocation]" (GS 22).

6. Theonomy. Insofar as He is the origin of the whole economy, we emphasize that He is the dispenser of the Law. Ours is a theonomistic existence, that is, one that refers to God, to his creative and saving

plan, to his holy will for us. God has made us for himself; he knocks at our door and offers us his friendship to give fullness to our lives. If we want to close ourselves off or if we want to establish a closed autonomous culture, it will appear to us as a stranger, or an intruder and we will ostracize it.

a. Those who desire to live with the spirit (that is, under the law of the Spirit of life) seek in all the will of God, the conformity or union of wills; he is determined that his personal will rhymes with God's will. St. John of the Cross writes: "The state of this divine union [of the soul with God] consists in having the soul according to the will with such a transformation into the will of God, so that there is nothing in it contrary to the will of God, but that in all and through all its movement it is the will of God alone."[3]

b. Theonomy does not mean heteronomy (submission to an external and superior law). The commandments of God's law are not the arbitrary orders that a despot imposes on his subjects, but "the demand for meaning and coherence in the bosom of our human lives" (H. Bouillard) and, therefore, the internal law of the realization and fulfillment of our being and vocation. This law is internal because it is promoted by the Spirit of God from within and because it does so through the personal conscience, which is "the other vicar of Christ" (Newman). As Bouillard also says, referring to Christ, when He emphasizes the divine precept of love of neighbor, He does not encase an external imposition on us; That precept is what each of us wants to find in our neighbor. Even if we experience interior resistance to the divine commandments because they demand a misappropriation, renunciation and dea-

3. SAN JUAN DE LA CRUZ, Subida del monte Carmelo, 1,11,2. I've updated the expression "desta" to "of this".

th of the "old man", we can also grant them an interior consent. Psalm 119 is the psalm of God's will joyfully be internalized in a process of personal maturation: the person praying expresses his love for the law, a compendium of wisdom and lived as a gift in the framework of a covenant relationship.

c. Theonomy is opposed to anomy. This was what the anarchists seemed to be thinking about, with their maxim "neither God nor master". In fact, it is worth asking: how can man be a free subject if his conscience is under the dictate of a transcendent sovereign ("God") and his concrete life is under the empire of political, legal, social and economic orders that bind him completely ("master")? Certainly, God is not to be represented or lived as a hypertrophied superego that asserts untold rules and prohibitions and generates in us all kinds of fears and inhibitions, while at the same time blinding the sources of joy and curbing all spontaneity; but, if by anomy we mean a spontaneity without rule or discipline or discernment, such a lifestyle does not establish us in the realm of freedom, but in a painful dependence under the domination of drives that enslave us. We fall into addictions.

d. The will of God and the freedom of man are not incompatible; they belong intrinsically. God is not a power that subjugates our humanity, for his commandments are the indicators of a process of liberation in which we are called to commit ourselves if we want to achieve true freedom, which is not a starting point in our lives, but rather a goal to be strived for. In fact, more than beings who are already fully free, we are beings who are freeing themselves. But it is important to point out that ours is a linked freedom, which is totally different from chained and oppressed freedom. (This is well indicated by some well-known verses

by José Luis Blanco Vega, SJ: "Since my will is surrendered to yours...").

The problem that will arise is that of discerning the concrete will of God. Slightly modifying a psalm, the spiritual person's plea will be: "Make your will known to me, show me the way I am to follow."[The Psalm says: "Make your grace known to me"; we understand that grace to mean that knowing God's will is true grace.] And it is also important to analyze the images of God that one carries with oneself in a more or less conscious way, since they can be not inadequate, but false, and have harmful effects. In the NT there are several references to a certain unhealthy or at least imperfect fear, and to a theological relationship focused on slavery (cf. Rom 8:15; 2 Tim 1:7; 1 Jn 4:18). It is not necessarily a question of a vindictive God, but perhaps it is identified first and foremost and almost exclusively with the norm, which is not always understood and discerned correctly.[4]

e. God's will is presented in three forms. First, as a universal call. This is the form it takes in the "commandments of the Law of God", addressed indiscriminately to every human being. Note that in order for something to be called "God's commandment" (let us take the expression for granted), it is required that all wills be able from within to give their consent and agree on it as good. As truth is the agreement of minds, good is the agreement of wills.[5] Proper

4. A valuable work in relation to the images of God is A Love of Rediscovery. Beyond the spontaneous representations of God (Bilbao, Desclée, 2017), by Brother Emmanuel, by Taizé.

5. It is impossible for all wills, in a stable way, to agree on something that is not good, because this means erecting a particular way of seeing as a universal rule and criterion, and the proper thing for these particular ways is to generate confrontations (Laberthonnière).

to God's commandment is precisely his call to "de-individualize" us and open us to a real communion in goodness.

Second, as a personal vocation. If in the first aspect a certain theism (Kant) can agree, in this the believer goes further and speaks of the will of God as a personal call. It is the vocation of Abraham, of Moses, of the prophets, of Mary, of Paul, of every believer. It refers to the personal truth of each one, that truth that is hidden, with Christ, in God. Now it is a question of discerning what one's own state or form of life should be, what one's mission should be ("I am a mission on earth": Zubiri [EG 273]). The acceptance of God's will will be expressed in these words: "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears" (1 Sam 3:10); "Behold, O God, I am to do your will" (Heb 10:7), etc.

Finally, there is the will of God at a certain vital crossroads, in which one wonders: Where to go? "Lord, what do you want me to do here and now, in this concrete situation?" and he says: "Not what I want, but what you want" (Mk 14:36 par.).

7. The Father, the principle of our action. God is not only the principle of the norm, of the law; he is also the principle of action: "Keep working your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who activates in you the will and the activity to carry out his plan of love" (Phil 2:12b, 13). Another version says: "for it is God who activates in you that will and that action that surpasses good will" [NBE]). Hence we call it the Life of our life and the Force of our strength.

In tradition, different kinds of grace have been spoken of. One of the divisions is that which distinguishes between working grace and cooperating grace. Bernard Lonergan explains it this way:

"Operative grace consists in the substitution of the heart of stone for the heart of flesh; substitution that is beyond the horizon of the heart of stone. Cooperating grace consists in the fact that the heart of flesh becomes effective in good works through human freedom. The operative grace is religious conversion. Cooperating grace is the efficacy of conversion, the gradual movement towards a full and complete transformation of one's whole life and of all one's feelings, one's thoughts, one's words, one's actions and one's omissions."[6]

Let us briefly gloss over what is said in this text about working grace, framing it in other glimpses of the mystery of God. Who and what God is and what it consists of and how far God's "omnipotence" reaches can be determined only from what we know of his action, in which we would highlight a threefold power. In the beginning, the power to create: in a loving and fruitful ecstasy makes the realities of our world emerge from nothing. In the end, the power to rise and to bring everything to completion: God reaches the limits of death and reawakens in the deceased a life no longer subject to mortality. In the middle, the power to justify the sinner by changing his heart of stone into a heart of flesh: God reaches the depths of the soul and through the gift of love that he gives us forges in us a new man. In these three modes of operation he manifests his divinity. A prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours refers to this divine activation of our will and our action: "Lord, may your grace inspire, sustain and accompany our works, so that our work may begin in you, as at its source, and always tend to you as to its end" (Lauds Prayer of Monday of the First Week).

6. B. LONERGAN, Il metodo in teologia (Brescia, Queriniana, 1975) 257. Italics mine. There is a Spanish translation.

8. The Father, model. But God, the Father, does not appear in the original Christian testimonies only as a principle (a principle that loves us and believes in Christ, a principle that shows us the path of our humanization and divinization, the beginning of our action). God also figures as a Model and, therefore, as Form. For the time being, he is presented as the Form of the Son: thus, in the Gospel of John in particular, Jesus appears as the replica on a human scale of what the Father says and does. He embodies God's goodness and mercy. But the Father is also the form or model of Jesus' disciples or believers. Let us look at several testimonies: "Be perfect [wholly good] as your heavenly Father is perfect [good]" (Mt 5:48);[7] "be merciful as your Father is

7. On this text T. Goffi offers an illuminating comment: "If we are able to know and do the will of God, can we consider ourselves perfect like God? Jesus alluded to this when he commanded: "Therefore be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48) Jesus, aware that God the Father is good in the absolute sense (Mt 19:17), confirmed that it was a diabolical temptation to pretend to be "God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). He limited himself to encouraging us to enter into intimate communion with God, to reflect his thought in our reflections, to carry out all our gestures on the initiative of his grace, to follow in our affections the rhythm of his charity, to make our existence as a whole and in its details a translation of the divine plan. It is always and only a matter of being what God wants us to be, not as God is in the intimacy of his absolute pleasure. It is about being perfect as God wants us, not as He Himself is. \u2012 It is not a question of being perfect like God the Father, but of uniting ourselves to him in such a way that his will is reflected in us. Intimate familiarity with God the Father is a sign of our spiritual perfection, provided it denotes an emptying of ourselves to be totally receptive to him alone; as long as it denotes our permanence in an attitude of devout recognition by the incessant benefits that God has done for us. On the contrary, it would be an intolerable irreverence to claim a certain familiarity with God in the midst of a negligent life" (The Spiritual Experience, 27-28).

For his part, G. Lohfink explains that "perfect" is not to be understood according to the ideal of perfection of the Greek image of man, that of an autarkic personality, who has reached the peak of his life and whose virtues have matured so much that further increase is no longer possible; After the Matthean telios is the Hebrew tamîm, which means "whole", "undivided", "unharmed", "healthy" (cf. S. PENG-KELLER, Geistbestimmtes Leben, 234).

compassionate" (Lk 6:36); "forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph 4:32); "In a word, as beloved children of God, be like him" (Eph 5:1); "Do not conform yourselves to the passions of old, when you lived in ignorance. On the contrary, be holy in all your actions, just as he who called you is holy, for it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy' (1 Pt 1:15-16). Perhaps the invitation of 1 Jn 3:7 to be just as he just also refers to the Father. However, we can point out that this call to resemble God the Father seems rather rare in the NT.

9. Other symbols. It is not only under the species of Father that the Scriptures represent God. They also do so under other symbols or images: Lord, Husband, Friend, Ally... The maternal side of God is found in various places in the OT and the NT. The Father, the principle or origin of everything, is also the homeland or goal of everything and everyone (cf. Rom 11:36). St. Augustine formulated it this way: "You made us [=God as the principle], Lord, for you [= God as the goal] and our heart will be restless until it rests in you [=God as goal]". Our tradition is heir to this variety of terms. Too often, to present a person's relationship with God, he has resorted to such metaphors. Thus, in such a variety of names, we recognize that each is limited, even though that of Father is paramount.

10. We have emphasized the divine will to be what, together with God's agape, Jesus highlighted in his proclamation. We affirm, then, a) God's "good will" towards us, his benevolent will (eudokia), and b) God's will as his "dream" or project for us. Our attitudes will therefore be: first, gratitude and trust, and then obedience, like Jesus.

We have to accept our limits, our finitude, fragility and not knowing. This humble acceptance is not a reason for paralysis, but for trust and for sensible action, far from any "deification" and all excess..

In the Jewish tradition, there were three traits under which the father was considered in the family: that of care and protection, that of authority, and that of the paradigm or model. Paternal care is the foundation of filial trust; paternal authority is the reason for filial obedience (not the obedience of the slave or servant) and the condition of paradigm is the motive for imitation.

Let's see a small diagram of the whole of the above:

II. Christ, the Son

The second principle is Christ. We are studying Christian spirituality, so reference to Him is inexcusable. What does it matter to say about Him here? He is a summit worthy of worship, but also a path to travel to reach the goal that is the Father and the consummate Kingdom of God. We see Him as the Form of the disciples, as one who has lived in one's humanity the beginning-end tension and has reached its perfection, and as one who shares with us a splendid bundle of gifts so that we can be configured to Him.

1. Jesus and the Holy Spirit

We confess that Jesus is the Word or Word of God incarnate. It will seem that the union of the divine and human nature in the person of the Word makes the presence and action of the Spirit superfluous. But, according to the testimony of the NT, the Spirit of God intervenes in the human origin of Jesus and in his entire life journey. The Virgin Mary conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35[M. Iglesias translates Lk 1:35: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, that is, the power of the Most High will shelter you under his shadow." "That is" translates an explanatory (epregettic) kaí. It will be the subsequent ecclesial rereading of the passage, in the global context of the reading of the entire NT, that will allow us to understand that this name without article and its explanation as the power or power of God refers to the Holy Spirit confessed as a personal divine reality.]; Mt 1:18); here, the Spirit intervenes in the ontological constitution of Jesus (in the union of natures in the one person), which many theologians present as a new creation (not from nothing, but from the germinal contribution of Mary, who is a true mother, not a simple channel through which that

humanity passes); here, the Spirit initially "spiritualizes" Jesus so that he may live his filial identity from the beginning. At baptism, he descends upon him in the form of a dove (Mk 1:10); here, Jesus appears as the One Anointed by the Spirit for the exercise of the messianic mission; the Spirit "guides, accompanies and strengthens him throughout the course of carrying out his ministry".[8] In fact, from baptism onwards, he is driven by the same Spirit into the desert to be tempted (Mk 1:12); in the programmatic discourse of Nazareth he will present himself as anointed by the Spirit (Lk 4:18); he will cast out demons by the power of the Spirit (Mk 3:28); he will rejoice in the Holy Spirit (Lk 10:21), who raises him from the dead (Rom 1:4). From the Cross he gives the Spirit/Spirit (Jn 19:30) and, risen, breathes the Spirit into the disciples, enabling them for mission (Jn 20:22); he will ask the Father to send him to him (cf. 14:16, 25; Jn 7:39; Acts 2).

2. Jesus, the Form with which the disciples are to be configured

We connect with what was said above. About the action of Jesus S. Guijarro writes:

> *"Jesus justified His way of acting by saying that He imitated the action of His Father. This 'imitation of the Father' was what best characterized a son in ancient times, and this means that Jesus' relationship with the Father is fundamental to understanding his action."*[9]

According to the fourth gospel, Jesus is the copy or transcript, on a

8. G. URÍBARRI, The Mysticism of Jesus, 113. See, for the whole Spirit-Christ relationship, pp. 100-121.

9. Cf. S. GUIJARRO, Jesus and the Beginning of the Gospels (Estella, Verbo Divino, 2006) 85.

human scale, of what the Father says and does. But here it is important to present Him first of all as the Form of believers. We are called to "conform" or be conformed to Him (symmórphous eînai toû eiknos toû huioû autoû: to be conformed to the image of His Son, to reproduce that image: Rom 8:29). Above we referred to the will of God in several concretes; here it can be said that God's will is that we be configured to Christ. The beloved Son is the ever-normative Form: he always followed the will of his Father, and therefore we must always follow him.

An impersonal norm is not proposed, as in ethics. Our common vocation is to live trusting in the Father and obedient to the Father like Jesus, to allow ourselves to be configured to Christ and to be configured to, to allow ourselves to be transformed and transformed in him, to allow ourselves to be identified and identified with him, to allow ourselves to be Christified and Christified, to be each one "another Christ".

3. The beginning-end tension in Jesus himself. Jesus and the Law

Jesus himself lived in his own way the subject-form and beginning-end tension presented in the diagram of the first chapter. The angel undoubtedly announces to the shepherds: "Today he who is the Lord Messiah is born to you in the city of David as a Saviour" (Lk 2:11), a formula that reflects the Paschal Christology of the beginning. It is not our place to expose the development of Christology in those beginnings. But let us not forget that "Jesus grew in wisdom and in age and in favor with God and man" (Lk 2:52); and let us not forget that he lived his truth in different states or conditions, pointed out when speaking of Jesus and the Spirit, that this truth was marked in a process whose final end is his constitution as the glorified Messiah and as Lord (Kyrios).

His identity as a Son is his truth and his form, but he passes through states that are subsumed (that is, overcome and preserved, or "enhanced" and transformed). The forms by which it happens are: Son in concealment; Adult son and eschatological (that is, definitive and unsurpassable) bearer of the Kingdom during the ministry; The Son of God in power, which is His final form (1 Rom 1:3-4). It is the process lived by the eternal Son of God in becoming human, in becoming man.

a) In the stage of concealment, he lives in subjection to his parents (Lk 2:51). That is, he was born under the Law given to Israel (Gal 4:4) and lives subject to this Law, which commands: "Honor your father and your mother." This simple note of subjection to parents appears as a sign of their acceptance of the other provisions of the Law.

b) At the stage of his ministry he overcomes this regime of things: "Who are my mother and my brothers?" (Mk 3:33). There is a break with the way of life that he could lead until that moment. The root is that the time has come for him to announce-bring the fullness of time and to act as an eschatological prophet. "Complies" with the Law... and "transgresses" precepts of the Law. The old has passed. His own mother and brothers, if they want to enter the Kingdom, must renounce all pretensions to him and recognize his mission, accepting the overcoming of the old and the establishment of the new that he brings. It violates standards of ritual purity or Sabbath observance as understood by the Jews or certain Jewish groups. And they were not minor things. Gabino Uribarri writes about meals:

> *"For the Pharisees, the daily meal was essentially a religious act, in which the preservation of identity and conduct pleasing to God were at stake. For this reason, Jesus' meals subvert both the image of God (which pleases him as a daily worship once he is not*

in the Temple) and the identity of the people (it brings to ruin the identity of Israel, since it breaks down the wall of separation through which identity is built; cf. Eph 2:14)."[10]

c) In the final stage, he appears as the crucified-exalted Messiah, and there is the definitive "abolition" of the Law with its commandments and rules, and the establishment of the Law of the Spirit of Life, established by Him in His role as Lord. He died executed by the representatives of the Law and cursed by the Law ("Cursed is he who hangs on the tree": Deuteronomy 21:23, quoted in Gal 3:13), but that power had no force over Him.

Now the Law is not (anymore) for men what it was intended to be: the mediator of their encounter with God, the one who justifies; the fulfillment of the Law does not grant the right to communion with God. This is a free gift that God grants in and through his Son apart from the works of the Law, not by virtue of its fulfillment[See, for example, L-.M. CHAUVET, Language and symbol. Essay on the Sacraments (Leumann [Turín], Elle Di Ci, 1988).]. Nor will the Temple be the sacred space in which God grants reconciliation; henceforth the Body of Christ will be the same. Thus, the two great mediations of Israel (Law and Temple) are relegated. Now our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and our redemption is Christ (1 Cor 1:30).

But is not the Law a gift of God to the people? did not Jesus live subjection to the Law as a way to his own form? Was not the Law for him a pedagogue that led him to his fullness? It seems that the answer to these questions can be outlined as follows: in the beginning, the Law, which for him was particularly personified in Joseph and Mary,

10. G. URÍBARRI, The mysticism of Jesus, 192. Cultural anthropology points out the importance of these barriers in preserving identity.

was a good path to himself and to the Father because they represented a Law in good condition, in its right point: not replaced or altered by traditions of the elders, but respected in its sanctity; not hypertrophied, not idolized. That Law, thus modulated and thus accepted, is a good way and a good pedagogue. We have said "not idolized", because the Law independent of the Spirit and of the gift that God makes of himself is not the way to God, but to pride and conceit when you believe yourself to be a "legal", "perfectly legal", "perfectly in order with the Law".

Jesus lived permanently in obedience to the Father, whose will is the golden factor or thread that gives unity and continuity to his life, beyond the differences and ruptures that may have existed between the stages indicated. This is highlighted by several testimonies of the NT. In Heb 10:5-7, when he entered the world, some words from Psalm 40 are put on Christ's lips, in which the atoning sacrifices and the fulfillment of God's will are contrasted. And the author continues: "In the first place he says [...]. Then he adds: Here I come to do your will. In this way, it annuls the first provision and establishes the second. Because we have done God's will, and because of the offering that Jesus Christ made of his body once and for all, we have been consecrated to God" (Heb 10:8-10). In John, Jesus puts this statement on the lips: "My sustenance is to do the will of him who sent me to accomplish his work [of salvation]" (Jn 4:34). In the prayer in the garden Jesus will say: "Abba, Father! Take this cup of bitterness away from me. But let it not be done as I will, but as you will" (Mk 14:36). Finally, in Heb 5:8 we find this sentence: "Although he was a Son, he learned by suffering what it costs to obey." Thus, we see how Jesus always maintains, from end to end, from beginning to end, unity with his Father. He has lived it dramatically at certain moments: he has been put to the test, he has

suffered contradiction (Lk 2:34; Heb 12:3), hostile forces have risen up against him, he has known agonizing tension; but he is the New Adam, the New Man who committed no sin, nor did they find deceit in his mouth (1 Pt 2:22). He was like us in everything except sin (Heb 4:15). In obedience to the Father he lived under the Law and under the authority of his parents; in obedience to it he was "unsubmissive" to certain precepts of the Law and radicalized others; in obedience to him he sipped the cup of bitterness.

In Jesus of Nazareth, Ratzinger-Benedict XVI dialogues with Jacob Neusner about Jesus' relationship with the Torah. Neusner enters mentally among the former listeners of Jesus and then goes in search of another rabbi. He comments: Jesus does not omit anything from the 613 precepts of the Law, which tradition would progressively condense. But Jesus added something: Himself. The perfection that the Torah demanded, to be holy as God is holy (Lev 19:2), now consists in following Jesus: it is what the rich character lacked. At the transfiguration this voice is heard: "Listen to him." Gese comments: "Jesus has become the word of divine revelation. The Gospels could not state it more clearly and powerfully: "Jesus is the Torah itself." For Neusner it is equivalent to putting oneself at the level of God, to becoming God.[11]

4. The process lived by Jesus at the moment of his consummation (death-glory)

He, the Christ, has attained the fulfilled Form. The letter to the Hebrews and Luke's gospel emphasizes that Jesus achieved his perfection. "In fact, it was fitting that God, the end of the universe and the crea-

11. Cf. Joseph RATZINGER, Complete Works. VI/1. Jesus of Nazareth. Writings of Christology (Madrid, BAC, 2015) 186-187. The quote from Gese, ibid., 351. The dialogue Ratzinger-Neusner goes to the root of Christology.

tor of all, purposed to lead many sons to glory, should consume the pioneer of their salvation through suffering, for the consecrator and the consecrated are all of the same kind" (Heb 2:10-11); "suffering he learned to obey and, when consummated, became the cause of eternal salvation for all who obey him, for God proclaimed him high priest in the line of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:9-10); "Didn't the Messiah have to suffer all these things to enter into his glory?" (Lk 24:26). These passages indicate clearly enough that Jesus lived a story, a vital adventure, with true human depth; it means that he has undergone a process, in which he moves towards the end of his maturity or fulfillment.

One text, at least to some extent, points to the process lived by Jesus. His death had, above all, a first effect on him. After quoting two passages from Hebrews, the author says:

"The physical death of Christ is the symbolic, sacramental reality, first of all, of death, in Him, of all His sinful abjection, and consequently [it is the symbolic reality] of the total appearance of His Divinity in His humanity, that is, of His fullness of sanctification – not in what this implies of the moral order, but of ontological transformation – and, for the same reason, of his glorification. Death was necessary – according to the Father's plan – so that the glory of the Father, communicated to the Son eternally and through the Holy Spirit in time, that is, in his humanity, would be revealed in him in its entirety, that is, consummate Christ. "Was it not necessary that the Messiah suffer these things, and thus enter into his glory?" [Lk 24:25]. Christ is personally consummated in his death, inasmuch as it is by his sacrifice that consecrates him ("and for all of them I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in the truth" [Jn 17:19]. The one that makes Him, who was really a wayfarer, return entirely to the Father. The death of Christ, / insofar as it is a sacrifice, sacrifices Christ, consumes him, supernaturally, from this human

slope of his abject state of a servant in solidarity with sin, without being a sinner, leading him to the fullness of his glory. Thus also St. Paul will say:

"But he who was brought down a little above the angels, Jesus, we see, because of his death that he had suffered, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for the good of all" (Heb 2:9). The death of Christ removed the obstacle which prevented his fullness of grace from redounding to his whole being in Christ himself, piercing and glorifying everything. Thus, first of all, Christ's sacrifice is a sacrifice for Him. But Christ's sacrifice is carried, as we see, to the ultimate effect of His glorification. I mean that Christ's sacrifice also comprehensively embraces his resurrection and his ascension into heaven."[12]

We have moved on the axis "form" (subject in potential – subject in form). We have presented the Form itself (Jesus Christ) as a dynamic reality, in movement towards the fullness of itself; We would say that it went from plenitude to plenitude. And we conclude: death-resurrection is the maximum splendor of Form. Thus, he is fully constituted in the Form for all of us.

5. Configuration to Christ

But can we really be configured to him? Is he not the only one, the incomparable? Is it not an enormity to want to reproduce in ourselves the proper form of Jesus the Christ? To answer this question, two observations should be made. In the first place, we recall some words of Luther, perfectly acceptable: non imitatio fecit filios, sed filiatio imitatores. It is the gift of filiation that enables us and urges us to follow and imitate; otherwise, we would adopt a Pelagian approach. According to the interpretation that has come down to us of Pelagius'

12. A. ANDRÉS ORTEGA, Cuerpo místico y vida religiosa (Coculsa, Madrid, 1959) 165-166.

thought, he maintained that we possess a natural capacity to live in justice and holiness; the work of Christ would not be properly of justification, but of mere exemplarity. (Cf. the exposition of Neo-Pelagianism in Apostolic Exhortation. Gaudete et Exsultate, 47-59). Secondly, it is not advisable to be carried away by the spirit of presumption, believing oneself capable at any time of facing any action or any trial. Jesus' words to Peter: "Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; you will follow me later" (Jn 13:36) point out that there are elements or aspects of following for which the disciple is always not mature.[13]

Moreover, we must not feel overwhelmed at all: each one will live his or her configuration and following according to his or her own measure, he or she will be "another Christ" -if we may speak that way - according to the capacity that the Spirit bestows on him.

Following precise indications from the NT, it is convenient to detail a little more about the set of gifts or capacities that have been granted to us. In this way we will see that the configuration can take on concrete profiles and we will consider it, not as an arrogant and blasphemous pretension, but as a gift-vocation to be welcomed with veneration, gratitude and responsibility. We organize into three groups the gifts or abilities granted to the followers of Jesus.

1. Gift in the line of communion. Those called to reproduce the image of Christ) are invited to enter into the family circle of Jesus, that of his great relationships and friendships. His great truly constituent relationship was the filial relationship with God, his Father; well, we are granted the grace of having the same God and Father as he is (cf. Jn 20:17; 1:12-13; 1 Jn 3:1; Rom 8:29; cf. Heb 2:11). And, having the same God

13. For a more detailed discussion of this point, see "Religious Life," vol. 81 (1996) 29-34.

and Father, we are entitled to call God "Abba", like Jesus himself (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; cf. 1 Pt 1:17).

2. Gifts in the line of identification. Our concrete humanity is remodeled at the levels that make it up: thought, feeling, action. Let's look at the first two.

Disciples are offered these lot of possibilities or gifts.

a) To have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16), so that the truth of Christ can be kingly seated in us (2 Cor 11:10). Jesus declares: "I do not call you servants; I call you friends, because all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." As if to say, "I have no secrets from you. I have initiated you into the innermost depths of my life. I have communicated to you the family tradition, that secret formula received from my Father. You are my confidants." For this reason, we are given possession of the same words that the Father gave to Jesus (Jn 17:22; cf. Jn 17:14). These are part of the legacy that Jesus bequeaths to the disciples in his "testament" (Jn 17).

We could descend to concrete considerations in relation to the learning of the mind of Christ or, in other words, of the gaze of Jesus. The Gospels offer notes on this gaze: trusting and expectant (in directing it to heaven before the multiplication of the loaves), compassionate with the suffering, affectionate in the call to follow addressed to the rich personage, graceful and recreative when looking at Zacchaeus or Peter after his denial, angry at times; and they also offer notes on the education of the disciples' gaze, so that she would be contemplative and trusting (seeing God's providence on the birds), profound (not being carried away by the first impression: the poor widow put more than anyone else

in the brush or piggy bank), clean and not greedy (when looking at a woman).

b) In our relations with one another we are granted to have the sentiments proper to Christ Jesus, who, being of divine condition, emptied himself of his rank, took the form of a slave and passed through one of many (Phil 2:5ff. Fronéo means "to think and feel", "to be sensible", "to have good feelings"). These sentiments are expressed in a profoundly supportive participation in the condition ("slave") and the fate ("death") of others, without vindicating any excellence or primacy except that of service: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for all" (Mk 10:45).

Likewise, we can experience the joy of Christ (Jn 15:11; 17:13) and receive the peace of Christ (Jn 14:28), which will be crowned in the appropriation of Christ's glory: "[...] so that the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ may be yours" (2 Thess 2:14).

The Gospels record a whole range of Jesus' feelings: exultant joy at the return of the disciples sent on mission (cf. Lk 10:21), compassion (cf. Mk 6:34; etc.), sadness at the harshness of Jerusalem (cf. Lk 19:41; 13:31-35), tenderness or affection (he says to the disciples: "Do not be afraid, little flock" [Lk 12:32]), anger at the hardness of heart of those who spied on him (Mk 3:5), etc.

3. Gifts in the mission line. Jesus is endowed with power. This has multiple manifestations: his very proclamation of the Kingdom; his way of teaching: he spoke as one who has authority; his victorious lordship over demons; his therapeutic gifts. These are very special powers that Jesus is endowed with. We can reformulate them as follows: to name the present; to elaborate the fantasies that draw the profound identity

of man, the image that God has of him as a fulfilled man (Discourse on the Mount); to exorcise the ghosts (the negative powers) that dominate individuals and human groups; to help face suffering and the cross of life with a "productive", fruitful attitude.

For this specifically missionary dimension he bequeaths to us a third batch of goods: dynamisms or capacities for evangelizing action. Concretely, we are given the grace to: a) be inhabited in our weakness by the power of Christ (2 Cor 12:9; cf. Eph 6:10); b) not being of the world, as Jesus was not (Jn 17:16), which implies belonging to another order: to the kingdom of light; c) to obtain over the world the victory that Jesus obtained (Jn 16:33; 1 Jn 5:4); d) being endowed with the exousia or power of Jesus, it will not be surprising that we receive another power: that of doing the works that he did, and even greater ones (Jn l4:12).[14]

6. Gift in the line of fulfillment and eschatological consummation

Jesus is the Son glorified by the Father. And he grants us to have (here/there) the glory that the Father has given him (Jn 17:22, 24: "I have given them the glory that you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are. [24] Father, I desire that all those whom you have given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory you have given me..."; 2 Thess 2:14: "That the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ may be yours"; cf. 2 Cor 3:18). They are once again goods bequeathed to his community by Jesus in his testamentary dispositions.

14. The meaning of this phrase in John should be studied: perhaps it refers to the whole of the disciples rather than to each one personally. The whole community of the Son would thus be an extension of the strength of the Son. He received the Spirit of the Son from the Father, after Jesus the Son was risen from the dead.

5. We can recapitulate this set of gifts using symbolic language and indicating the root gift: a) We can be living stones as Jesus is the living stone (1 Pt 2:4); b) we can be salt of the earth, overcoming the risk of an insipid and tasteless life; c) we can be the light of the world (Mt 5:14), as He is the light of the world (Jn 8:12), or we can be light and live as children of light (Eph 5:8-9; 1 Thess 5:5; Jn 12:36), avoiding a double temptation: that of leading a life of pure appearance and glitter and also that of leading a mediocre, dead, gray and dull life, very different from a simple and discreet life, but radiant (see the radicalism of the discourse on the mountain); d) we can be new wineskins containing the new wine, as the CIVCSVA has proposed to us; e) we can, finally, spread the good smell or fragrance of Christ, the euody Khristoû (2 Cor 2:15-16). At the root of all these gifts is the fundamental gift: we have been given the gift of the same Spirit who dwelt in Christ and enabled him for mission (cf. Rom 5:5).

It is understandable, in view of this bundle of powers granted to the followers, that in the corpus ioanneum there appear commands and exhortations, very radical in some cases, which intimate the disciples to act like Jesus:

> *"If I, who are the Master and the Lord, have washed your feet, you ought to do the same to one another. I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:14-15); "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so also love one another. By the love you have for one another, all will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:34-35); "By this we have known what love is, that He gave His life for us. We too must lay down our lives for our brethren" (1 Jn 3:16).*

Francis of Assisi, who was designated as alter Christus (a second Christ) was configured with him. This is what the stigmatization or impression of the sores on their body means.

7. In conclusion

Let us keep our eyes fixed on Christ. The text of Hebrews proposes it: "Let us run steadily in the race that is opening before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of the faith" (Heb 12:1-2). Gregory of Nyssa also proposes this, when, commenting on a text from Ecclesiastes ("the wise man has his eyes fixed on his head"), he writes:

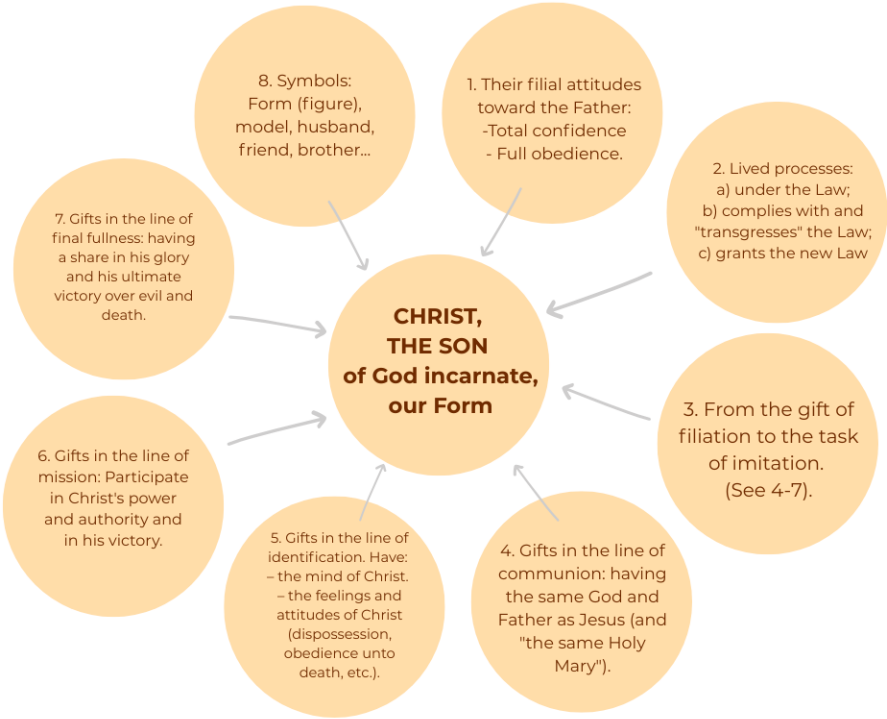
> *"If the soul lifts up its eyes to its head, which is Christ, according to Paul's interpretation, it must be considered happy because of the piercing gaze of his eyes, since it has them fixed where the darkness of evil does not exist. The great Paul and all who had a greatness like his had their eyes fixed on their heads, as did all who live, move, and exist in Christ. For just as it is impossible for him who is in the light to see darkness, so it is impossible for him who has his eyes fixed on Christ to fix them on anything vain. Therefore, he who has his eyes fixed on his head, and by head we mean here the one who is the principle of everything, has them fixed on all virtue (since Christ is the perfect and totally absolute virtue), on truth, on justice, on incorruptibility, on all good."*[15]

The conformation or configuration to Christ (cf. Rom 8:29) must be situated in a network of Pauline terms that bear the prefix "with": to suffer, to be crucified, to die, to rise, to be con-vivified, to be incorpo-

15. ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA, Homilies on the Book of Ecclesiastes. Homily 5: PG 44, 683 f. Translation of the Liturgy of the Hours according to the Roman Rite, Monday of the 7th Week: t. III (Madrid, Coeditores Litúrgicos, 1984) 192. Cf. SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS, Ascent of Mount Carmel 2,22,3-5.

real, to walk, to be glorified. They reflect the paschal mysticism of the apostle and of believers. (We return to it in chapter 3).

Other terms. In spiritual existence, as has already been pointed out, Jesus the Christ does not appear only under the species of Form, Figure, Exemplar, Model. He is the Lord, the new Man, the Savior, the Redeemer, the Bridegroom, the Beloved of the soul, the Brother, the Shepherd, the Living Bread, etc. It is the Son in whom we can be children. Each one can examine which symbols are most significant to him. The category "Form", referring to Christ, must be enriched with these titles and symbols. Moreover, this category must be understood in accordance with all that is stated in this section dedicated to Christ. Living in Christ, we are called to live as He lived. – Let's see the set of what is exposed in a diagram:



III. The Holy Spirit

> *"Perhaps the skeptic was right who, in the age of the coaches, declared that he understood God, the Father and the Creator, and also with Jesus, the Son; but that, with regard to the Holy Spirit, he suspected that what happened to him was what happened to him, to the third posthorse, which was always counted on, but which was never used and which was as if it did not exist.*[16]

It is clear that there are sectors in today's Christian communities for whom this comparison of is not valid. The Pentecostal and charismatic phenomena and currents of liberation theology and feminist theology (theologies that, according to some, have to do with the Spirit) have reached undeniable notoriety and breadth[Cf. M. WELKER, The Spirit of God. Theology of the Holy Spirit (Brescia, Queriniana, 1995) 17ss.]. Attention to the charismatic dimension of the Church and the living of the mission under the impulse of the Spirit lead to the recall of the principle that animates ecclesial life. The awakening of the charismatic movement and prayer groups has brought to the fore the presence of the Spirit in that life. Such an awakening frees the religious experience from the grip of intellectualism and moralism and helps to integrate affective and corporeal-expressive dimensions into the experience and expression of faith.

On the other hand, it seems that in the East attention to the Spirit has always had a greater presence. Let us mention a significant and well-known text by an Oriental in which the transcendence of the Spirit for personal and ecclesial life is made known:

16. E. SCHWEITZER, The Holy Spirit (Salamanca, Follow Me, 1984) 11-12

"Without the Holy Spirit, God is far off,

Jesus Christ is in the past,
the Gospel is like a dead letter,
the Church a simple organization,
the mission a propaganda,
worship an evocation,
Christian action a slave morality.
"But in the Spirit,
the cosmos is exalted and groans until the kingdom gives birth,
the risen Christ is present,
The gospel is a power of life,
the Church means Trinitarian communion,
authority a liberating service,
the mission a new Pentecost,
the liturgy, a memorial and an anticipation,
human action is deified.[17]

Through baptism we were born of water and the Spirit. He, the gift of the Father and of the Risen One, gave us new life as children of God, incorporated us into Christ and gave us the original and founding configuration with him. And on the Spirit depends all the further dynamic of growth and strength for spiritual combat; in short, the whole spiritual life depends. We will deal with the possibilities brought by the gift of the Spirit, charisms, gifts and fruit of the Spirit, the mediating function and various symbols of the Spirit.

17. Quoted in J.A. GARCÍA, Being Men of the Spirit, or How to Live "in the Air" of Jesus, in "Sal Terrae" 74 (1988)

1. New possibilities that the gift of the Spirit brings to our lives

The reflections that we offer below, although they are not a gloss of the quoted text by Ignacio de Lattaquié, are in tune with it. We will speak of the new possibilities that the gift of the Spirit, Lord and giver of life, brings to our human life.

1. Without the Spirit of God we cannot know God. At least we must say: we cannot know the depths of God, the depths of God. We first collect some texts from the theology of John and Paul, then we quote some Fathers of the Church and a text from the liturgy, and finally conclude with other current texts.

a) Let us first look at the testimonies of Scripture about the Spirit as an agent of our knowledge of God and Christ:

> *"The Spirit probes everything, even the depths of God. Let's see, who knows man's way of being, if it is not the spirit of man that is within him? For the same thing, God's way of being is known only to the Spirit of God. And since the Spirit that we have received is not of the world, but the Spirit that comes from God, we can recognize the gifts that God gives us" (1 Cor 2:10b-12). \u2012 "The advocate whom the Father will send to you when you plead my name, the Holy Spirit, will teach you all things and will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26; cf. also Jn 16:12-15). \ u2012 Similarly, without the Spirit we cannot know or confess Jesus as Lord: "Therefore I warn you that no one can say , 'Jesus out!"if he speaks moved by the Spirit of God; nor can anyone say, "Jesus is Lord!"unless it is moved by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). Without the Spirit of God, man cannot discern and accept as true the witness that Jesus bears of himself as the Word of God, as the Son of God.*

b) Let us add a note on the thought of the Fathers of the Church on the knowledge of God:

> *"The Spirit shows us the Word ... who leads us and leads us in turn to the Father" (St. Irenaeus). The Greek Fathers illustrated their idea of the Trinity with three stars, but not forming a triangle, as the Latins did, but one after the other. The first star (the Father) lends its light to the second (the Son, "light of light," as we say in the Creed) and then to the third (the Holy Spirit, "who proceeds from the Father and the Son," so that to the human eye the three stars appear as one.*
>
> *"St. Basil happily sums up how God relates to man and man to God: 'The way that leads to the knowledge of God is from the one Spirit, through the one Son, to the one Father. On the contrary, divine goodness recirculates from the Father, through the Son, to the Spirit "to us».*[18]

c) Let us also recall the stanza of the hymn Veni, Creator Spiritus: Per te sciamus da Patrem / noscamus atque Filium / teque utriusque Spiritum / credamus omni tempore ("Grant that] through you we may know the Father and know the Son and you we create for you at all times the Spirit of both").

d) Regarding the reading and interpretation of Scripture, the Constitution Dei Verbum of the Second Vatican Council says: "Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with [the help of] the same Spirit thanks to whom it was written.[19]

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18. L. GONZÁLEZ CARVAJAL, Esta es nuestra fe (Santander, Sal Terrae, 19842) 94. The text of Irenaeus, in Demonstration of Apostolic Teaching, 7; that of Basil, in On the Holy Spirit, 18,47: PG 32, 154 B.

19. Conciliar Constitution Dei Verbum, 12

e) The work of the Spirit resembles an interior movement that moves the soul towards spiritual things (cf. Gal 4:17): it is like a holy desire, which confers a special sensitivity to things on high. It is explained: he is the love of God that makes us love the things of God. This love of the things of God is also necessary to understand the Word, because man only truly understands what he loves: "One does not enter into the truth except through charity" (Saint Augustine). To enter into the truth and understand it to the point of living from it, we must be in harmony with it and sensitive to the things it makes known, and that is what love does. Thus, those who visit a museum without feeling the slightest love for the universe of art, will not understand the works on display; The same happens with poetry, if one is not sensitive to the poetic world. A fortiori this is true of the Word of God: the Spirit shapes the sensibility we need to penetrate the world from which the Word speaks. John calls him "Paraclete," that is, the one who helps, the one called to help, and he affirms: "the Spirit of Truth... he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:17-26). He works in the Church as Paraclete of the Word. It was only when he came to the apostles that they understood what Jesus had told them (Acts 1:6-7). He who hears Jesus Christ will find God, but in order to find him he must seek and love from the heart what the Word speaks of: he must seek and love God and the things of God. The Spirit works this.[20]

2. Without the Spirit of God we cannot love God: "The love of God [genitive, subjective and objective] has been poured out in our hearts by the Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). The gift of agape comes to us with the presence of the one who receives the name of Agápe in the bosom of the Holy Trinity.

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20. We have followed very closely A. DONDEYNE, La foi écoute le monde (Paris, Éd. Universitaires, 1964) 179-180.

3. Without the Spirit of God we cannot work for God (agir Dieu, say some French authors). We point out three ways of acting to God:

a) a) We "work" God in the mysteries or sacraments: in baptism the water acquires salvific efficacy through the Spirit; bread and wine become Eucaristic gifts by the outpouring of the Spirit called for in the epiclesis.

b) We "work" God in the multiform ecclesial life. In the Second Epiclesis we ask that the Spirit gather in unity all of us who share in the Body and Blood of Christ. Of the gifts received by the work of the Spirit for the edification of the community, Paul writes:

> *"The gifts are varied, but the Spirit himself; the functions are varied, although the Lord is the same; the activities are varied, but it is the same God who activated everything in everyone. The particular manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the common good. One, for example, through the Spirit, is given right words; to another, wise words, according to the same Spirit; to a third, faith, by the power of the same Spirit; to another, by the power of the one Spirit, gifts to heal; another, to perform miracles; on the other, to distinguish inspirations; the former, to speak different languages; to another, to translate them. But all this is activated by the same and only Spirit, who distributes it, giving to each individual in particular what seems to him" (1 Cor 12:4-11).*

c) Finally, we "work" God in daily life, living fidelity to the new law received. The Spirit is the "new law internalized." It is really something internalized, that is, endeared ("dwells in you") and this is how it imprints its impulse from within. The Spirit acts fortiter et suaviter. It becomes present in the heart, in the most intimate and profound center of the soul, and from there it affects the responsible dimension of the person (cf. Ez 36:27; Rom 8:1-13). By bringing ourselves into communion with Christ, we can bear much fruit (cf. Jn 15:5, 8, 16).

4. As has been said, without the Spirit of God we cannot give existential worship to God. Likewise, without God's Spirit we cannot pray to God. One of the gifts of the Spirit is precisely that of piety, by which we can joyfully feel ourselves children of God and create harmony and gentleness to listen to God and welcome him and to turn to him and speak to him in a trusting way like Jesus. The Apostle writes: "And the proof that you are sons is that God sent into your heart the Spirit of his Son, who cries out, 'Abba! Father!" (Gal 4:6; cf. Rom 8:15; cf. also Rom 8:26: the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness and intercedes for the holy people with groanings that are unspeakable, as God wills).

5. Without the Spirit of God we cannot desire God, be nostalgic for Him. Man inhabited by the Spirit does not live only in the realm of needs, but also in that realm of longing, of longing for the Totally Other, of communion with the living God.

6. Without the Spirit of God we cannot bear witness to God. Jesus says: "But when you are handed over, do not worry about what you are going to say or how you are going to say it, for what you have to say will be inspired by you at that moment; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks through you" (Mt 10:19-20; cf. par.).

Only by the work of the Spirit of God can the mystery of God be proclaimed to men, only by virtue of the Spirit can they be invited to see in Jesus the Messiah of God (cf. Jn 4:28-29). Speaking of God is not a task that we can do on our own, we can only do it if God himself entrusts the witness of his truth to our lips as men, and it will be the initiative of the Spirit that moves us to be witnesses. Only in docility to the Spirit can a word be spoken about God, for only words spoken with the power of the Spirit have saving power and can arouse faith, raise hope, and engender life of love. There are no other words under

heaven with which man can do saving work. The aspects mentioned pertain to spiritual life and its dynamics. It is the Spirit who is at the origin of this life (He is Lord and Giver of life) and of its growth.

2. The Spirit and charisms

The apostle Paul expounds his doctrine on charisms in 1 Cor 12-14. In the face of the Corinthians' overestimation of certain extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, Paul emphasizes the primacy of charity, translated into service, and the spiritual gifts given to all in baptism. It is not a matter of personal achievements, but of undeserved gifts. The active presence of the Spirit does not consist in spectacular events (such as speaking in tongues), but in the fullness that comes from the sharing of the gifts received by each one. In the face of brilliance and fascinating personal radiance, Paul links charism and grace with the experience of poverty, which is transformed into richness by sharing, and the experience of weakness, which, accepted, becomes strength (cf. 2 Cor 12:9). In the midst of hardship, Paul is filled with overflowing comfort (cf. 1:5).

The charismatic fullness that characterizes a life governed by the Spirit has these three features: a) I am permanently referred to the charisms with which others give me gifts and relieve me; b) "my" charism was not given to me in the first line for me, but for their benefit; c) What forms or constitutes "my" charism is partially hidden from me. The result of my engagement is invisible to me, as is the glow on my own face. "God most often gives weak and incapacitated members 'honour and brightness' (1 Cor 12:24). Why? For the Body of Christ is the Body of the exalted and the low, of the Risen and the Crucified" (J. Moltmann).[21]

21. I have followed in this section 2 S. PENG-KELLER, Geistbestimmtes Leben (2018) 69-72.

3. The Gifts and the Fruit/The Fruits of the Spirit

The spiritual tradition has paid particular attention to the gifts and fruits (the fruit) of the Spirit. Here are some quick notes.

1. Gifts are permanent dispositions that make man docile to follow the promptings of the Spirit. The doctrine on gifts has its origin in Is 11:2-3: "On him shall rest the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of understanding and wisdom, the spirit of counsel and courage, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord. (He will be inspired by the fear of the Lord)." The LXX and the Vulgate add the gift of piety, by splitting the gift of "fear of the Lord". So we have the following list of gifts: the gift of wisdom, the gift of understanding, the gift of counsel, the gift of knowledge, the gift of strength, the gift of piety, the gift of the fear of God.

2. In theology this understanding of the gifts has been presented: the first four perfect the understanding; the other three, the will. Let us look at the definition of each gift proposed by scholastic theology. The gift of wisdom is a supernatural habit that makes the mind capable of perceiving and penetrating the truth of faith, with a particular instinct of the Holy Spirit. The gift of understanding sheds its light on God and on divine things, making known and tasting the reality of God and supernatural realities and leading to disgust and detachment from the world and its satisfactions (it prevents us from yielding to "spiritual worldliness," as Pope Francis would say). The gift of knowledge sheds its light on the things of the world, making known that they come from God, illuminating the insufficiency, instability, and transience of such things, to use them with moderation, as a ladder by which one ascends to God. The gift of counsel sheds light on the paths that lead to God, indicating what must be done, especially in difficult cases, in the moments of life that are valid for centuries,

because the most important and most transcendent decisions must be made infallibly, on which one's own salvation and that of others depend. The gift of fortitude confers supernatural energy to do and suffer great things, despite obstacles. The gift of piety awakens in the heart filial love for God and a deep devotion to the Divine Persons and things, also moving us to works of mercy towards our neighbour, in whom the image of God is seen. The gift of fear is a habit which, by the instinct of the Holy Spirit, moves the soul to reverence the Majesty of God and to flee from all that separates it from Him.[22]

In a condensed form, we present them as follows: spirit of wisdom: the gift to savor the sovereign Good; spirit of understanding and knowledge: gifts to understand the ways of God and the way to God; spirit of counsel: the gift for good decisions; spirit of fortitude: the gift for undertakings and trials; spirit of piety: the gift for filial love of the Father; spirit of fear of God: the gift for filial respect for the Saint.

3. Fruits are perfections formed in us by the Holy Spirit as the first fruits of eternal glory. The basic text for the elaboration of the list is Gal 5:22-23: "But the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control." The translation of the Vulgate and the catechism complete the list until it reaches twelve, perhaps taking its basis in the text of the Apocalypse in which

22. We followed the presentation by Mr. BERTETTO, The Holy Spirit and Sanctifier (Rome, Pro Sanctitate Editions, 1977). He offers a more detailed exposition on pp. 313-324. See also the extensive explanation offered by the Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, voz Dons du Saint Esprit, vol. III, col. 1579-1641.

Beatrice of Nazareth, a Cistercian nun of the thirteenth century, in one of her Visions, contemplates God as the source and the great river from which other rivers and streams flow: rivers are the stigmata or wounds of Christ; the streams, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Cf. G. EPINEY-BURGARD and E. ZUM BRUNN, Women Troubadours of God. A Silenced Tradition of Medieval Europe (Barcelona, Paidós, 1998) 109-110.

it is said that the tree of life gave twelve harvests, one each month (Rev 22:2). Here is the list offered decades ago by Fr. Astete's catechism: charity, peace, long-suffering, kindness, faith, continence, joy, patience, goodness, meekness, modesty, chastity.[23] We can articulate them as follows: love as a "root-fruit" multiplying fruits; immanent fruits: joy, peace, self-control (the fruit of difficult freedom); long-lasting fruits: patience/long-suffering (in the face of adversity), fidelity (in love and dedication to what is valuable); fruits for coexistence and interpersonal relationships: goodness, kindness, meekness.

Commenting on the text of Galatians, the Protestant theologian M. Welker writes about the fruits, and particularly about the fruit of love:

"Thus, more or less complex and broad situations are mentioned, which are characterized by free self-limitation and free surrender to other creatures, understood both as liberating attitudes for those who cultivate them and as liberating gestures for the recipients.

Free self-limitation for the benefit of others creates spaces of freedom and possibility of development for others, which surprise and delight the recipients. However, it does not condition other creatures, it does not raise claims before them, but it guarantees them such spaces that it favors their development. This free self-limitation can, in situations of tension, manifest itself in the face of magnanimity and meekness. When he makes the interests of others his own, he can take

23. The list of the Vulgate, on which the Catechisms were inspired, is as follows: "charitas, gaudium, pax, patientia, benignitas, bonitas, longanimitas, mansuetudo, fides, modestia, continentia, chaste". We point out an interesting fact: Paul does not write "the fruits", but "the fruit" (ho karpós). He would be insinuating that the indicated elements form an intrinsic unity, not a heterogeneous and casual conglomerate, but rather. According to M. Iglesias, the text could be translated as follows: "The fruit of the Spirit is charity: ..."; All listed After the two points is the set of manifestations into which charity is broken down, they are the harmonics of love.

on the aspect of benevolence and goodness. But it is in love that this free self-limitation in favor of other creatures finds its full realization."[24]

4. The mediation of the Spirit

The Spirit lives a true synkatábasis (condescension; we also speak of the kenosis of the Spirit): he adapts, he is the mediator between the Form and our personal reality, analogous to his mediating (reconciling) function between the Father and us, sinners (perhaps rebellious or indifferent or unloving or unfaithful to his love).

This mediating function between Christ and us takes on a concrete profile that is determined by our insertion in a specific society and time. Our configuration to Christ is not an ahistorical phenomenon that leads us to reproduce in the present the smallest details experienced by Jesus in his historical conjuncture and his cultural context. The Son of God, in his incarnation, assumed a concrete humanity marked by a set of "cultural customs" that are not binding on us (clothing, long hair, food codes, etc.). What matters is to incorporate into our lives the basic notes of his human trajectory and give them the maximum possible relevance in the kairos of our time. This is what the Spirit helps us with. Jon Sobrino formulated it this way: "The Spirit binds us and unties us. It binds us to the fundamental structure of Jesus' life in order to know God; it unties us to discover God in each new historical situation."[25] It is the Spirit that allows us to establish the letter-spirit game in its correct relationship, so that on some occasions we can adopt this maxim: "The

24. M. WELKER, Lo Spirito di Dio. Teologia dello Spirito Santo, cit., 233. The following pages can be read.

25. J. SOBRINO, "Light that penetrates souls". Spirit of God and lucid following of Jesus, in "Sal Terrae" 86 (1998) 12. Quoted by J. LOIS, Espiritualidad cristiana, in C. FLORISTÁN (ed.), New Dictionary of Pastoral Care (Madrid, San Pablo, 2002) 507.

letter kills; the spirit vivifies" and in others, the opposite: "The spirit kills, the letter vivifies" (or as Francis of Assisi said: "the gospel to the letter, to the letter, without gloss").

5. Names and Pictures

There is no opposition between two names given to the Spirit: Love, Strength (dýnamis). It seems, yes, as if the first came from the apex of personal experience and the second from the purely material world. But here we understand "force" as "power" (dynamis), which is an ontological concept, not a concept only valid for the field of infraspiritual reality. We simply refer to a fact of experience and observation: love is the most powerful principle of all vital dynamics. Surrender or oblativity (which entails renunciation and sacrifice), creativity in new ways, the illusion of projecting and the courage to make projects come to fruition, etc., have their deepest roots in love. Love arouses energies; and love is an integrator of energies: it does not kill any, it promotes them all. It does this in the people or communities that are the end of that love. But he also does it in the very subject he loves, which is the subject that interests us now. In love for the other I reconcile with myself; being good with the other (with the Other) I am good or good with myself.

We use several images to speak of the nature and action of the Spirit: water, fire, wind, breath... Water is destructive (floods and tidal waves): it symbolizes that the old man is drowned in baptismal immersion by the work of the Spirit; water washes, purifies: the Spirit "washes away stains"; water is the principle of life: the Spirit "waters the earth in drought", and those who open themselves confidently to him are "like a tree planted by the water, which takes root by the stream; when summer comes, he will not feel it, his leaf will be green, in a year of drought

he is not restless, he does not cease to bear fruit" (Jer 17:7-8); water, being the same, produces a variety of effects: the Spirit awakens many charisms in the Church.

Fire also has destructive power: it burns, consumes, and the Spirit does the same with the old man; fire purifies metals, removes their impurities, sharpens precious metals, refines gold and silver, and the Spirit does the same by purifying us of dross; finally, fire is the image of love, of "burning" love, and the Spirit is the one through whom the love of God and the love of God have been poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5).

The wind is invisible, mysterious (you don't know where it comes from or where it is going), powerful, uncontrollable; it purifies the atmosphere and carries away pollution, it prompts (sometimes impetuously), and so it is and the Spirit works (e.g., when it overtakes a prophet and enables him to do certain actions). The breath refers to life: the Spirit is the giver of new life. The breeze that caresses our body suggests the gentleness with which the Spirit works, of which we say that it acts fortiter et suaviter (with force and gentleness).

IV. The Church

After speaking of the three divine and transcendent principles, and at the same time most present in human history and in the life of the believer, we present the Church, that is, the community of the children of God, the followers of Jesus, those reconciled by the Spirit. We relate it to the Trinity, we explain its mission in our spiritual life, we point out some symbols and we conclude by indicating the basic dimensions of the ecclesial community.

1. Church-Trinity. The Church is "one people gathered together by virtue of the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". Imitating this expression of Saint Cyprian,[26] we will say: the Church is a people sanctified by virtue of the holiness of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is primarily an attribute of the Church; derivatively it is the responsibility of its members. (Such a statement is more understandable if we see the Church as a mystica persona.) This people, made up of women and men of different races, nations, conditions, languages, cultures, and history, outlines and anticipates God's great plan: to be all in all (1 Cor 15:28).[27]

2. Ecclesial community and grace What is the Church? The Church is grace in history and in society, the proof that we live in a world already reconciled (although on the way: cf. below) and in a friendly and habitable world: "Where there is sin, multitudes break out," Origen said; it is the reverse of the tapestry (of the tapestry frayed, burnt and blackened by a fire, the faded tapestry); the right or the light side of the tapestry shows us something else: "Where there is grace, community is generated and assembled".

3. The Church is our teacher, the school of life in Christ and towards Christ. Everything that pertains to the exercise of our theological life we have received in it and from it: we have learned the names of God and of divine realities and the uninterrupted history of God with men; we have learned to call upon God and to be reconciled in his name

26. SAN CIPRIANO, De oratione dominica 23: PL 4, 553. There is translation in the Works of S. Cipriano published in the BAC (edition and translation by Julio Campos) and in the collection of the Ciudad Nueva publishing house.

27. This project is what Gisbert Greshake discusses in Maria-Ecclesia. Die Einheit Marias und der Kirche (Ratisbona, Pustet, 2014). He understands the divine goal as the spousal union of God and his creation.

and by his grace; we have learned the joy and freedom of God's children. The Church has taught us to see with her eyes, to speak with her lips, to love with her heart.

4. Learning in the Church. You don't learn to be a Christian by following a correspondence course. Tradition, in the Church and in our institutes, is transmitted by word, in writing, by practice. Oral tradition is done by word of mouth ("catechesis") and in direct contact between transmitter and receiver. There is also a written tradition; it is a long-distance tradition and only has a support (and preservation) function. One cannot be a man, neither a Christian nor a religious by correspondence; we must immerse ourselves in the life of human, Christian and religious communities; it is necessary to be inserted in these vital areas. In a word: it is necessary to live in company. Zubiri says:

> *"In a way, the strength of the company is irradiation. It is one of the cases in which a certain exemplary causality takes on a physical character. It was necessary to point to the dimension of power; in order to have been able to understand what the physical character of mere exemplarity can consist of. The ancients said that words indicate, and examples drag. Exemplarity does not consist in there being a model, a paradigm; exemplarity has a positive power of radiance, in which the powerful character of exemplarity consists of."*[28]

In short, we can say that tradition (in other words: the concrete community in which we live, which is the bearer of tradition) offers us mediations of Form (concretely: this is how God is praised, this is how one loves, this is how one lives, this is how one serves, this is how one

28. Theological Dictionary of Consecrated Life, s.v. "tradition". Zubiri's quote, in Sobre el hombre, Alianza Editorial - Society for Studies and Publications, Madrid, 1986, 322.

forgives, etc.) and offers us impulses towards the fulfilled form. We will have been better disciples or more wayward and wasted, we will have had some less expert teachers; but we have not lacked good teachers, past or present, or very worthy and unforgettable witnesses, who have nothing to do with the "gray people" that Nietzsche despised.

5. The Church, then, has been our mystagogue: she has introduced us into holy mysteries. But isn't she also sinful? We cannot affirm that sin, scandal, abuse, injustice, misunderstanding, etc. are absent from its enclosure. (These past few years have painfully brought it to the forefront.) However, by virtue of God's self-promise, which in Christ has granted us sonship; by virtue of Christ's irrevocable gift of self for his bride, a redemptive gift permanently rerealized through the sacraments of his love celebrated in her and with which he incorporates into himself those who come to him; by virtue of the gift of the Holy and sanctifying Spirit, God's love and favor do not abandon the definitive People of God or any child who is recognized as opening to them.

There are fruits of holiness (the fruits of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit source of all holiness). There are "resources" of holiness (the Word and the sacraments, in which the Spirit acts as a transcendent operator of the new order in which these realities become part).

6. Person and Church. Christian existence is not a flight from the solitary to the solitary. The Church is the great "we" in which, as if forming a single being, we live so many essential dimensions of Christian existence: we profess together the same faith ("we believe": this is how, in the plural, Nicaea and Constantinople are expressed); we intercede for one another; the Lord's Prayer, the prayer of the community of Jesus, expresses the hopes we share; the sacraments are ecclesial actions: the minister acts on behalf of the Church and these actions generate

ecclesial communion. The passage from the anchorite life to the cenobitic or community life proposed by St. Basil was based on keys such as these: life in community allows us to know ourselves; In community life we can live the commandment of love.

7. In her history, the Church shows us a great variety of forms of holiness, multiple personal ways of configuring ourselves to the Form. There are a variety of tracking models (with their respective irradiation power). It is worth bearing this in mind in the reflections that we offer below on the subject.

8. We have already outlined some appropriate titles or symbols to represent the Church: mother, teacher, pedagogue, mystagogue. In her bosom we are generated to new life; she accompanies us in the long learning of the theological life: in the way of living faith, hope, love and all the moral dimensions of the Christian's life; she introduces us to the celebration and living of the mysteries, which by gift and "commission" of the Lord, they are made by it and in it. The Church is the house in which the Christian is welcomed (baptism), nourished (Eucharist), forgiven (reconciliation), blessed and accompanied (marriage, anointing).

9. To sum up: the ecclesial community, through its sacramental celebrations and its divine praise (leitourgia), its witness and teaching (martyria and didascalia) and its service in charity (diakonia), makes life possible for us: the life of Christ in us. It is important to maintain the ecclesial dimension of Christian spirituality, in the face of any tendency to reduce spirituality to a merely private matter. The liturgy, as an action of the priestly people that we are, reminds us of this at all times.

V. Mary

Jesus the Christ is the Form or Figure, but not in the Pelagian sense of mere outward model which shows us our native powers of self-realization. Jesus' words in John are unequivocal: "Without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). He is the Figure who is entangled in us to enable us to reach our truth, which is hidden with Him in God. Proportionately, we can consider Mary as a factor in our configuration to Christ from two points of view: as an agent and as a model. We relate both aspects directly to the Church and in this relationship, we include that of each of the believers.

1. Mary is the presence that accompanies the Church and believers on their current pilgrimage of faith. Sometimes, in certain prayers that circulate out there, it seems to be assigned a function that would confuse its presence and action with the presence and action of the Spirit and, consequently, displace the Spirit. The metaphorical language we use can lead to misunderstandings; but confusions of this kind must be carefully avoided. Mary, however, has a unique role with regard to the ecclesial community and its members. We can discover it in Jesus' words to Mary from the cross: "Behold, your son is yours" (Jn 19:27). In this final moment, Mary listens in faith to the instituting, "performative" words with which the Revealer declares to her and to the disciple their mutual relationship, the mutual relationship between her and the Church, between her and the follower of Jesus. The Church is, by the gift and mission of the Son, a community that Mary loves dearly. Mary is, by gift of the Son, not a burden, but an inalienable good for the Church.

Mary's love for the Church and for the faithful is not a rival love to the love of the Son or to the justice of the Son. To such an extent is

it not so that Mary's love for us lives from God's love for us, and she, close to us because she is close to God, is presented to us as the presence of God's grace. In accordance with the mission entrusted to her by Jesus, hers is a maternal love, and her service is a maternal service to the life of the believing community (cf. LG 61-62), which does not deny her sororal condition. Being maternal, they will be translated into tenderness, listening, acceptance, care, and companionship of the pilgrim people; they will be translated into "intercession". It is therefore entirely legitimate for the Church to take refuge under the protection of the "glorious and blessed Virgin". We should not be surprised that it does not spare us difficulties and suffering, because the "pretension of wanting to avoid at all costs the child situations of suffering or frustration, and of going out of our way so that he does not encounter even a minimum of 'tiredness' in his growth or in his work to conquer reality, prevents the evolution of a healthy aggressiveness and destroys the very possibility of building a basic trust and, therefore, an autonomous identity".[29]

What is the house in which the Church, in imitation of the Beloved Disciple, has welcomed and will welcome Mary? This house is his preaching, symbols, dogma, theology, catechesis and other expressions of the ecclesial word; in short: it is the house of his word. Also his art: poetry and literature in general; painting (icons, paintings...); plastic arts, engravings; architecture. Likewise, its liturgy: Marian solemnities and feasts. Likewise, his religiosity and non-liturgical prayer: parvo office, rosary, Angelus, month of May... Let us add his meditation and his supplication. At the root of all this, his love or religious affection.[30]

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29. L. PINKUS, The Myth of Mary (Bilbao, Desclée de Brouwer, 1992) 118.

30. See John Paul II's Encyclical on Mary: Redemptoris Mater, 31-35. Cf. P. IZQUIERDO GIL, Espacios en que la Iglesia ha acogido a María, en "Ephemerides Mariologicae" 57 (2017)

Vatican II refers to these four attitudes: veneration, love, invocation and imitation (LG 66).

This relationship with Mary is inscribed in the ensemble of warm relationships of believers: the relationship of filial love and trust with the Father, the relationship of spousal love with Christ[31]; the motherly love to be shown by those who exercise the Church's apostolic mission (cf. LG 65). Mary, precisely because she received a maternal mission, luminously represents this fundamental vein for the life of believers. We say "fundamental" because this warm and binding dimension of the religious relationship frees the Church and its members from structuring religious experience as a mere moral discipline or from turning the Church into a pure organization. And it arouses vital energies that enhance the believer's dedication and action much more than a whole package of imperatives. They are the energies that come from knowing that we are loved and knowing that we live in a friendly world; they are the energies of love and trust.

2. When presenting Mary as a model or figure, we will point out a series of Marian features of ecclesial spirituality and (inclusively) of our personal spirituality. Mary is the one in whom the Church can discover determining features of her identity and journey, and in whom we, members of the Church, can also discover them. Instead of proposing developments, we simply state the features.

209-229.

31. Or other similar forms of religious love for Christ: 'You have not seen Jesus Christ, but you love him; now, believing without seeing him, you feel an inexpressible joy, radiant with joy, because you obtain the result of your faith, personal salvation' (1 Peter 1:8-9)

The Church:

a) it is a community loved by God (cf. Lk 1:28-30);

b) it is the humanity of the self, a community called to collaborate with God in unconditional obedience to his will (cf. Lk 1:38);

c) it is the community of believers (cf. Lk 1:45);

d) it is the community that sings of the wonders wrought by God in it (cf. Lk 1:46-55);

e) it is the community that contemplates recollectedly, reviews within itself and remembers what it has seen, heard and touched of the manifestation of God in the Word that is Life (cf. Lk 2:19, 51);

f) it is the community that is with Jesus and shows him and gives him to men (cf. Mt 2:11);

g) it is the offering community (Lk 2:22ff.);

h) it is the community that shares the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anxieties of people, especially the poor and the suffering (cf. Jn 2:1ff.);

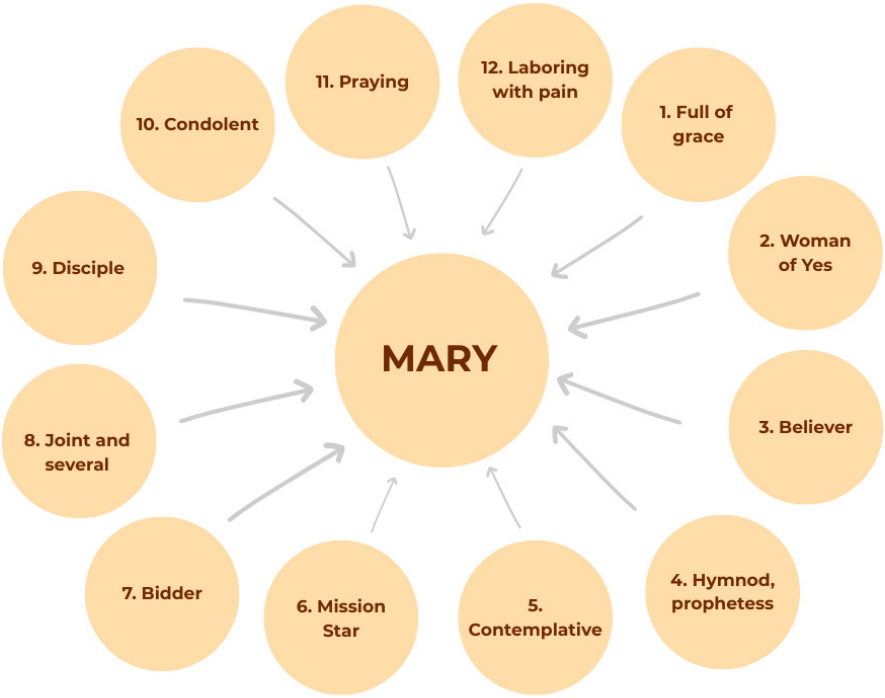
i) it is the community that listens to and fulfills the Word of God, and does not treat it as if it were its mistress and mistress with the right to gag it, control it and make use of it (cf. Lk 11:28);

j) it is the community that stands at the cross of Jesus and at the cross of men in which its Lord suffers to the end of the world (cf. Jn 19:25-27);

k) it is the praying community that awaits, at every moment in history, the gift of the Spirit, for its birth and rebirth (Acts 1:14);

l) it is the community that participates in the sufferings of the Messiah and that gives birth to the elect in tribulation (Rev 12).[32]

Let us present these twelve traits, like the twelve stars of Rev 12, in a diagram:



32. For more information on Mary, see St. DE FIORES, María, in St. DE FIORES – T. GOFFI, Nuevo Diccionario de Espiritualidad (Madrid, Ediciones Paulinas, 1983) 850-869. It contains thought-provoking pages. See also, by the same author, the entry 'Mary' in the Dictionary of Mysticism (Madrid, San Pablo, 2002); The Holy Trinity, Mystery of Life. Trinitarian Experience in Communion with Mary (Secretariado Trinitario, Salamanca, 2002); etc.

We quote a text by Hans Urs von Balthasar for the weight it gives to the concept of "form", to which we have been referring in our small treatise. He says this about Mary's life:

> *"Mary's life must be the prototype of what the ars Dei [the art of God] can form from a human matter that does not oppose it. It is a feminine life that in any case awaits, more than the masculine, to be configured by the man, by the spouse, by Christ and by God. It is virginal life, which does not want to know any other configuring law than God himself and the fruit that God gives it to bear, illuminate, nourish and raise it. It is both maternal and spousal life, whose capacity for self-giving extends from the physical to the summit of the spiritual. It is life definitively made available. In it Christ carves the form he needs, making use of it without hesitation, using it and squandering it to incomprehensible extremes, and then making it the object of his highest consideration, glorifying it. The situations of this life are inimitable, unforgettable, and, at the same time, unrepeatable, universally valid and significant. The three cycles of mysteries of the Rosary make them present in the anamnesis [memory] of the Church and of Christians, in the closest formal connection with the life of Christ. And in reality, Mary's life does not possess any form of its own and autonomy, but accompanies the form of Christ very closely, flows in the shadow and light of his unique form, which does not obscure it, but, being used by Christ, by carrying the Cross next to him, is bathed in the light that radiates from him."*[33]

33. H.U. VON BALTHASAR, Gloria. Una estética teológica. I. La percepción de la forma (Madrid, Encuentro, 1985) 502. The italics, except for ars Dei and anamnesis, are mine.

VI. The personal subject (the person)

Let us also formulate a few propositions about the person, considered in his concrete reality.

1. We are not born full-fledged, in the manner of the myth of Athena coming out of the head of Zeus; we appear rather as a board or blackboard on which nothing is written (Aristotle). We are born into a "moral nothingness" (Laberthonnière). Zechariah wrote on a tablet the name of the child (John), but his fate was a riddle: "What is this child going to be?" (Lk 1:66). That destiny is not fatefully written in the stars, nor are we like animals, which already at birth have faculties, a specific habitat and a program or pattern of behavior. We are thrown into life with total indeterminacy or indefiniteness and, as Paul said in another regard, this weakness and lack is at once our strength and great possibility. God has for each one of us a plan of life and fullness and has placed in us, as a starting point, an eros or unlimited impulse of self-realization (Lonergan), the desire to reach our fulfilled form. St. Augustine spoke of desire in its strongest sense, as tension with all our faculties (intelligence, will, feeling) to God, the Reality of realities that desires fulfills. With this the whole spiritual dynamic of the Christian is set in motion. Augustine says:

> *"The life of a good Christian is all a holy desire. But if a thing is the object of desire, it is not yet seen, and yet you, through desire, expand, so that you can be filled when you come to vision. Suppose you have to fill a large sack and you know that what you are going to be given is very bulky; you worry about widening the sack or the wineskin or any other type of container as much as you can; you know how much you have to put inside and you see that it is small; By widening it you make it more capable. In the same way,*

God with waiting enlarges our desire, with desire he enlarges the spirit and dilating it makes it more capable. Admire the Apostle Paul who expands the capacities of his soul to be able to accept what will happen. For he says: Not that I have already attained the goal or that I am perfect; I do not think, brothers, that I have reached perfection. But then what do you do, Paul, in this life, if you have not attained the satisfaction of your desire? Only one thing: to pursue with all your soul the palm of the celestial vocation, forgetting what is left behind and throwing yourself into what lies ahead. He has therefore affirmed that he is projected forward and that he tends to the end with his whole being."[34]

2. Saint Augustine also said: Qui fecit te sine te, non te iustificat sine te. Fecit nescientem, justificat volentem.[35] H. Bouillard comments in this regard:

"The divinization of man is distinguished from his creation because it is a transformation that demands his own consent, his personal response to the divine initiative. It is the gift that man can refuse without ceasing to be God's creature. Always present in man by the fact that he creates him in his own image, God makes himself present to man only through man's free conversion. The need for spiritual choice is in us the element that obliges us to distinguish the two modes of the divine presence, the two gifts. If divinization, if perfect likeness is for us a new gift, 'superadded' to the original image, it is because it comes to us through our free

34. ST. AUGUSTINE, I Ioh., tr. 4: PL 35, 2008-2009.

35. SAINT AUGUSTINE, Sermo 169, XI, 13: PL 38, 932. Translation: 'He who made you without you does not justify you without you. He made you without your knowledge; he does not justify you if you do not want him to.'

acceptance, which implies a before and an after."[36]

Indeed, God has placed us in our own hands.[37] We are entrusted to ourselves. There is, therefore, an inaugural, permanent and fontanal divine causality in our theological history; and there is also a human responsibility and personal cooperation in the work that God wants to do in us, but not without us. Everything depends on God, and everything depends on us as well. Without delaying in an exposition proper to theological anthropology, we gather the spiritual perspective of this axiom. Those of us who are eternal, and clumsy apprentices will not be able to express the dialectic grace-works in four lines, nor in four hundred. But there have been masters who have been able to do so in a way that is as brief as it is suggestive. They have three lines left over. One was Ignatius of Loyola, who knew how to formulate this link between grace and works in well-known phrases. Perhaps the version that circulates the most is this: "Trust as if everything depended on God and God alone; work as if everything depended on you and

36. H. BOUILLARD, Comprendre ce que l'on croit (Aubier, Paris, 1971) 55. The first italics are mine. The author then adds: "But what distinguishes is also what unites. By virtue of being the image of God, man must strive for divine likeness. He is so intimately destined for it, according to the Gospel message, that there is no other way to fulfil himself. The deprivation of this likeness would be for him not a simple absence, but a positive deprivation, an internal contradiction, a negation of his very being. The rejection of the "added" gift would operate a "subtraction" within the first gift. Thus, the urgency of the spiritual option, while distinguishing grace from nature, establishes an unbreakable relationship between them" (55-56).

37. St. Gregory of Nyssa, mentioned a few pages earlier, puts it this way: "We are, in a certain sense, parents to ourselves when, through the good disposition of our spirit and our free will, we form ourselves, we engender ourselves, we give birth to ourselves. We do this when we accept God in us, becoming children of God, children of virtue, children of the Most High. On the contrary, we give birth to ourselves abortively and become imperfect and born out of time when what the Apostle calls the form of Christ is not formed in us. It is fitting, therefore, that the man of God should be whole and perfect" (Homilies on Ecclesiastes, Hom. 6: PG 44, 702-703).

you alone." But there is one wording that, they say, is more Ignatian; it sounds like this: "Trust as if everything depended on you and on you alone; he acts and works as if everything depended on God and God alone." If we really trusted in this way, our way of living "dear grace" (D. Bonhoeffer) would be enviable. And if we really knew how to work like this, we would not fall into many things that we can fall into: into the restlessness, nervousness and overwhelm of those who believe that everything depends on them and only on them, and there they stop; in arrogance, when things have gone their way, as it seems, to their mouths; in dejection, when failure has been the final balance of a whole accumulation of improbable efforts... And we would live in a different mood.

If we represent the spiritual life as a sea crossing, a motto or maxim taken from St. Augustine is illustrative: let us sail totis velis, omnibus remis (with all the sails unfurled and handling all the oars). The sails will be unfurled so that the Spirit can blow and propel the boat, for without the favorable wind of the Spirit we could not move forward; but we also have to take up the oars and second that wind that blows in our favor. Through the "prayer" of those who are contemplativus in actione, the candles are in condition for the Spirit to act; by "action" all quietism is avoided.

3. No one can replace us: "No one can know salvifically in place of anyone else" (Laberthonnière). We cannot be Christians by proxy. It is true that everything is done by collaboration, as we have just indicated: it is God who justifies us and who is at the origin, the path and the goal of the whole life of the person who enters into the dynamic of the Spirit; likewise, the Church is the socio-historical condition of possibility of that realization in which we are engaged: it offers us all the services referred to above, to the point that the titles we recognized it (Mother,

Teacher, Pedagogue, Mystagogue) are justified. But, on the other hand, it is we who believe, hope, love, participate with our whole being in the celebration of the mysteries and in prayer, we give ourselves a concrete asceticism ("exercise", "exercise"). If, in the face of Pelagianism, we affirm that there are no powers of self-realization in us that render all grace, justifying or actual, superfluous, in the face of quietism and molinosism (or the dangers they run), we affirm that we are not purely passive beings in the hands of an omnipotence that shapes us at will.

4. The Form is one: Christ. But he, as a universal Form, is so engrossed in each one that leads him to be configured to him in an unmistakable way. Each one has its own path, its own processes, its own rhythms, its own goals; Recognizing and following them will be their own mission. John XXIII wrote in his Diary of the Soul (January 16, 1906): "From touching it so much with my hand, I have become convinced of something: of the falseness of the concept of holiness applied to myself that I have formed. I am not St. Louis, nor should I sanctify myself as he did, but my own distinct being, my own character."

5. Spiritual existence is not a disembodied existence. We live in a physical world, the material condition of our existence, and which is not purely a space that we inhabit, but a reality with which we are connected in many ways and with which we interact (cf. Laudato si' and his proposals for an ecological spirituality); we live in the sphere of sarx (understood as existence in fragility, according to the text by Lavelle cited below); We live in a socio-historical environment, in which we are called to shape ourselves by shaping it according to a hierarchy of values in accordance with man's vocation and by opting for the poor and suffering. The personalist philosopher Louis Lavelle said:

"The saint is not a pure spirit. We cannot confuse him with the angel. Death itself cannot make him an angel. Because holiness belongs first of all to the earth. It testifies that the life we lead here, fully mixed with the body, with its weaknesses, with its trivialities, is capable of receiving the reflection of a supernatural light, that it can acquire a meaning that surpasses it and that teaches us not only to bear it, but to love it."[38]

6. This is where the relationship between ethics and spirituality, between virtuous life and spiritual life, arises. T. Goffi expresses himself in this regard in these terms:

"What is the relationship between moral existence and spiritual existence present in the same person? The virtuous man has achieved all his self-education in the midst of good bio-psychic habits; he presents himself as an adult personality, rich in operational habits; he has a deep personal prudential sense to discern and self-determine in the midst of virtuous choices.

"The spiritual man, on the contrary, transcends his purely human abilities; he feels liberated by Christ in relation to his own personal perspectives of good (Gal 5:1); it is perceived as Spirit-oriented toward the simplicity of a global charitable spiritual motivation; it is rich in divine energies since it has freed itself and detached itself from all personal autonomy; he knows how to support the action of the Spirit without opposing it with a personal conception of good.

'Placing before God the mirror of his own soul, he will be illuminated by him as pure glass is when it reflects the sun.'"[39]

38. L. LAVELLE, Quatre Saints (París, 1951) 10.

39. T. GOFFI, Spiritual Experience Today (Sígueme, Salamanca, 1987) 58.

7. The spiritual man brings all his personal dynamisms to the table. If we have to go to the truth with the whole soul (Plato), we will go to our form, to our truth, with the whole soul: heart, will, reason, intelligence (= radical affective dimension, responsible dimension, rational dimension, intellectual dimension). We will go totis velis, omnibus remis.[40]

8. How the soul is prepared for the spiritual life. Another paragraph by Goffi extends the considerations made by the author on the contrast between virtuous life and spiritual life:

"The spiritual life is directed by the Spirit, but not exclusively. In the spiritual man a remote predisposition is required, constituted by a personal virtuous experience, as well as by [sic] an immediate disposition offered by the renunciation of one's own autonomous direction in order to show oneself entirely docile to the Spirit.

> *Master Eckhart observed that in the same prayer all personal petitions or invocations must disappear. "That is why in the best prayer that man can raise he must never say: 'Lord, give me this virtue or this disposition,' nor again: 'Give me, Lord, eternal life, or give me yourself,' but: 'Lord, give me what you want and do what you want and how you will, in whatever way, whatever it may be.'" In a prayer of this kind, the spiritual man shows himself totally surrendered to God (pròs tòn theon: Jn 1:1).*

40. An axiom that is important to keep in mind is the 'principle of the whole' or rule of totality: the first and foremost commandment is 'you shall love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your being' (Deut 6:4). This is where 'be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' comes in. We recall Jesus' observation about the widow who put a few coins in the Temple treasury: 'She has put in more than anyone else, for she has put in everything she had to live on' (Mk 12:43ff.). St. Maria Bertila Boscardin (1888-1922), a Dorothean nun, had this motto: 'To God, all glory; to my neighbour, all joy; to myself, all sacrifice.'

Master Eckhart offers a further indication, even more radical, about the predisposition of docility to the Spirit. He says the spiritual man feels so poor that he doesn't even consider himself "a place where God can act." If he did not have this sincere feeling, he would grasp God not as He is, but subordinate to His own self. "When God finds man so poor, then he does his own work and in this way man suffers God; and God is the proper place of his own operation by the fact that he works in himself. Here, in this poverty, man recovers the eternal being that had been, that is now and that will always be."

Man is spiritual, not because he is adorned with human virtues, but because he is "poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3). Only in this way can it fully welcome the Spirit of God, in the same way that the empty eye of every color can capture every color. "So you have the possibility of becoming God without great effort; do not miss this opportunity for divinization.'"[41]

9. Let us not forget the other side of the coin, which shows the drama of living: we are weighed down by innate self-centeredness (which is not properly selfishness), limitations, fallibility, greater or lesser inner chaos, impulses that are difficult to channel, less healthy habits that we have been able to contract, cowardice and fears (of surrendering, of suffering, of being marginalized if we do not bow to certain pressures, that is, the fear of being free), tiredness, disappointments, wounds that do not heal, a degraded social or community environment, bad examples received, apathy or laziness[42], low vital tone,

41. T. GOFFI, La experiencia espiritual, hoy, cit., 59-60. Remember the prayer that Charles de Foucauld put on the lips of Jesus and which the Little Brothers of Jesus recite: 'Father, I place myself in your hands.'

42. The object of an action and the degree of energy that fuels it: different things. It is

diseases of the spiritual life. In short, gravity that opposes grace (Simone Weil).

And the Adversary?

We have not referred to another subject of which tradition speaks: the Adversary, the devil, the tempter. Nor have we referred to the "world" (this will be discussed in the chapter dedicated to the spirituality of religious life). The NT message (temptations of Jesus, Paul's words about Satan clothed as an angel of light [2 Cor 11:14]), experiences of the desert Fathers, etc., recall this dark figure. Paul also indicates that his ministers disguise themselves as agents of justice. Pope Francis has also referred to the Adversary in Gaudete et Exsultate, 160-161. We remember the combat of Saint Anthony the Abbot with the devil. The explanation that has come down to us is that the devil and his hosts had been expelled from the spaces populated by the Christians and had retreated into the desert; now Anthony goes into the desert, which was the territory that Satan had left to settle, and Satan resists and attacks him with all his energy.

Satana maior Christus! ("Christ is greater than Satan"), Luther said. No creature can separate us from the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom 8:31-39). But this certainty must not make us naïve or short-sighted in the face of the presence of the demonic in history and in the face of the temptations that lie in wait for the believer.

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necessary to do such a thing. But where does the energy come from? A virtuous action can always be reduced if there is not enough energy available' (S. WEIL, Gravity and Grace [Madrid, Trotta, 1994] 32.

Conclusion

Let's review what has been said by pointing out some operations that we have carried out:

- We have tried to verify a spiritual dynamic in Jesus himself, a process of growth (not without arduous struggle and drama) until he reaches his full perfection.
- We have detailed the areas of personal life in which he asks to give himself and the configuration with which he is the Form (the feelings, the thought, the words, the actions, the sufferings and the final passion by which he reaches his glory).
- We have used some symbols and images (Father, Spouse, Friend, etc.; fountain-rivers-streams; water, fire, wind, breeze; candles and oars; living stones, salt, light, new wineskins, good smell, tapestry, sack) to refer to God, to Christ, to the Spirit, to the disciples. Images speak to the whole man, not only to the intelligence, and they mobilize the person.
- We have recalled some axiom ("he who created you without you..."; the principle of all or norm of totality: to love God with all one's heart, to go to God totis velis omnibus remis, "to God all glory...").
- We have written down some vital slogans ("trust as if everything depended..."; " To God all the glory...").