

THE PERSON AND MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

by **Kenneth Kinghorn***

In our time we are experiencing a tremendous renewal of interest in the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Varieties of teachings abound, some of which are non-biblical and some of which appear to be creative contributions. If various teachings abound, so do various methodologies—methodologies ranging from subjective impressions to rigid systematic approaches. Never has there been a greater need for a proper biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit and His ministry.

The approach used here has been to sift through the biblical teachings on the Holy Spirit and to determine the major emphases. This is not an attempt to examine various representative writers on the Holy Spirit. Consequently, there are no footnotes referring to monographs on and treatments of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Space limitations prohibit dealing with all the biblical references to or developments of the Holy Spirit. The responsibility for the choice of the three themes developed in the second half of this essay will, of course, be this writer's. Others doubtless would have chosen different emphases. However, the themes that will be dealt with in this paper seem to be major ones developed in the New Testament.

THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the Old Testament the word **spirit** signified feelings and emotions (Gen. 41:8, II Kings 19:7, Judges 8:3, Prov. 29:11, Isa. 26:9, Dan. 2:3), intelligence (Ex. 28:3, Deut. 34:9, Job 32:8, Isa. 29:24, Mal. 2:15), attitude of will (Ex. 35:21, Jer. 51:1, Hag. 1:14, Ezra 1:1, I Chron. 5:26), and one's general disposition (Psa. 34:18, Prov. 14:29, 16:2). But most important of all, the word **spirit** stood for life itself. For the Hebrews, God pre-eminently has spirit. He is a breathing, living, acting God. The Old Testament writers hold it a matter of great wonder

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that in the miracle of creation God transmitted His spirit of life to His creatures. He breathed into man the breath—the spirit—of life (Gen. 6:3, Job 10:12, Psa. 104:30, Isa. 44:3, Ezek. 37:6, 9, 10).

For the New Testament writers, the situation was basically the same. God's Spirit is vital, dynamic, and life-giving. Even as man's spirit is his person in action, so God's Spirit is His Person in action. God's Spirit is God acting.

In history, the Holy Spirit has been progressively understood by the people of God. Our perception of His nature and ministry has grown from the earliest biblical times throughout the fuller revelation of the Spirit in the period following Pentecost. The Old Testament prophets, in their dismay over Israel's unfaithfulness, looked forward to the time when God would move mightily in the midst of His covenant people so as to change their rebellion into worship and service. For these writers the best was yet to be. They longed for the time when God would intervene in the lives of persons to change them for good. Often these longings are seen in the light of the future work of the Holy Spirit.

For example, Moses said, "Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Num. 11:29). Ezekiel prophesied,

"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. . ." (Ezek. 36:26, 27).

One of the classic Old Testament passages regarding the future work of the Holy Spirit is found in Joel.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the men servants and maid servants in those days, I will pour out my spirit" (2:28, 29).

The prophets saw a day when God's Spirit would perform a new creative act, not unlike what he did when he breathed life into Adam. They looked forward to the time when God would impart a new vitality to a people who were rebellious and sinful. Only God's Spirit could effect the necessary change.

That new day began to unfold when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and she miraculously conceived a son, not of man but of the Spirit of God. For a witness for all to see, the Holy Spirit descended visibly upon Jesus at the beginning of His public ministry. The opening words

of His first recorded sermon text were, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . .” (Luke 4:18).

After Jesus’ earthly ministry climaxed with His resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit came in His fullness on the Day of Pentecost. As Christians began to experience the Spirit’s presence, they began to describe His working. And in the case of the Apostles they received and recorded new truth as to the nature of the Spirit’s ministry in the Church.

Several fundamental ideas about the Holy Spirit began to emerge in the life and thought of the New Testament Church.

1. The Holy Spirit is God’s primary agent in working in the lives of persons. The Holy Spirit was seen as the “Other Comforter” whom Jesus promised as His legacy to the Church. The New Testament avoids Gnosticism which teaches that God is pure spirit and that a part of His spirit is a natural possession of man. By way of contrast, the New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit of God is altogether other, and yet in response to our faith He does come to dwell within our lives. In other words, the Holy Spirit’s coming to man is the gracious act of a personal God. The believer knows God through the action of His Spirit in whom we have our lives and upon whom we continually depend.

2. Outward manifestations of the Spirit are not necessarily meant to be normative but rather they are simply an indication that God has total claim over all areas of our lives. No aspect of human personality lies outside the sphere of the Spirit’s activity. Luke is more concerned than other New Testament writers about describing physical results of the Spirit’s activity. For example, Luke writes of the Spirit’s descent upon Jesus in bodily form as a dove (Luke 3:21) and the miraculous speaking in other languages at Pentecost, in the house of Cornelius, and at Ephesus (Acts 2:4, 10:46, 29:6). We need to remember that Luke was reporting these events as a historian; he was not teaching doctrine as was Paul. The meaning of the external phenomena reported by Luke is not that they were to be standard experiences for all time. Rather they are illustrations of the decisiveness of the Spirit’s ministry and the radical totality of God’s working in human personality.

3. The Holy Spirit is inextricably linked with the risen Lord and the reigning Father. Paul, more than any other writer in the New Testament, emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. For instance, he alternates “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of Christ” in Romans 8:9, 10. No distinction is made between the two. This usage harmonizes

with Jesus' promise of the Spirit to come after His resurrection and ascension. At times Paul uses **Father, Son, and Spirit** together in the same passage because their ministry in the believer's life is one and the same. The best illustration is found in I Corinthians 12:4-6 "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone." (See also Rom.5:1-5 and Gal. 4:4-6.) Such passages demonstrate that the New Testament Church saw both the Holy Spirit and the risen Lord as expressions of God the Father.

The biblical accounts of the activity of the Holy Spirit is much more than merely subjective or applicative. Many theologians within the broad Reformation tradition have conceived of the Holy Spirit as directing our attention to Christ and opening our eyes to His work. His ministry is often restricted merely to an instrumental function. The result of much of this type of thinking is to relegate the Holy Spirit to a second-class reality, subordinating Him to Christ, limiting His work to the application of Christ's atoning work to the believer.

We have seen that the **function** of the Holy Spirit is primarily to exalt Christ and to mediate His living presence to the Church, but the **nature** of the Holy Spirit is that He is fully God in Himself. His nature is more than a subjective reflection of Christ's work. Christ Himself told His disciples that after His ascension the Holy Spirit would teach new things and continue His ministry in the Church. The Spirit's coming in His fullness at Pentecost marks a new event in the series of God's saving acts. The Holy Spirit creates a ministry of His own, not independent of Christ's but complementary to His. The Spirit may be resisted, grieved, lied to, quenched, and sinned against. He also may be loved and obeyed. He effects our conversion and sanctification; He leads the Church in its task of mission. He organizes, prays, inspires, corrects, sustains, equips, creates, and empowers. Thus, the Holy Spirit is not only the agent of God Who exalts Christ and applies His "finished work" to the Church, He is also the source of new creative actions in the Church. He has His own ontology and He functions in His own unique way.

Certain improper ways of viewing the Holy Spirit have always existed in the Church. One typical faulty view of the Holy Spirit is the identification of the Holy Spirit with inner impressions or outward manifestations. While the Holy Spirit doubtless does "speak" to the inner consciousness of man and while outward manifestations may sometimes be a part of His divine working, these in themselves should not be

confused with the Holy Spirit. Hunches and outward acts do not necessarily stem from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes they are very much of “the flesh,” or even from the Evil One.

An improper emphasis upon the Holy Spirit can lead to a “Cult of the Holy Spirit,” wherein Jesus Christ is neglected and worship centers almost exclusively upon the Holy Spirit. When this shift occurs we run the danger of blurring the distinction between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit. If we push Christ into the background and made the Holy Spirit almost the exclusive object of our worship and attention we run the risk of making Christ merely the historic inspiration for a religious principle.

Too little emphasis upon the Holy Spirit therefore results in institutionally objectifying Him. And too much of the wrong kind of emphasis on the Holy Spirit results in individualistically subjectifying Him. In either case we have not properly understood His nature or realistically dealt with His work.

Any biblical understanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit requires that we think of Him as the Spirit of Christ. In His last teaching about the Holy Spirit Jesus said, “I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you” (John 14:18). Matthew gives the same idea when he reports Jesus as saying, “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Jesus is not only the possessor of the Holy Spirit; He is the One who dispenses the Spirit to the community of believing Christians (Luke 24:49). The New Testament identifies the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, in which Christ Himself encounters His people (Luke 12:12, cf. 21:15, Acts 10:14, cf. 10:19). Paul plainly asserts, “Now the Lord is the Spirit” (II Cor. 3:17).

The goal of the Holy Spirit is to change our existence so that we may be conformed to the new manhood of Christ’s resurrection. Christ’s ministry, message, and nature constitute the starting point and goal of the Spirit’s creative acts, “We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord Who is the Spirit” (II Cor. 3:18; see also I Cor. 6:17 and Rom. 8:9-11).

We come now to a definition of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the divine third Person of the Holy Trinity whose function it is constantly to breathe creative life into the world and in a special way mediate divine things to the Church to the end that it may be formed after the image of the Son and serve as a principal witness of the grace of Christ to the glory of God the Father.

THE FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Obviously in the space which remains it is not possible to list and discuss all aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit. For instance, we will not be able to discuss the Spirit's part in creation, sanctification, revelation, inspiration, eschatology, etc. We will, however, discuss three aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit. These three aspects of His working are all related to the Christian life in the Church today.

1. **The primary function of the Holy Spirit in the lives of human beings is to bring them into a living relationship with Jesus Christ.** The most basic work of the Holy Spirit is Christian conversion and the working out in human life the implications and dynamics of the new life in Christ.

Christian conversion, sometimes call the new birth, results in a new orientation of one's personality toward Jesus Christ. The human spirit, bound as it is by sin, cannot regenerate itself. If the human spirit is ever to come into a knowledge of God it will be as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote, "Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom. 8:9). And he also wrote, "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 12:3).

The life of Paul illustrates the futility of seeking spiritual life apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. He felt in his pre-Christian life that true spiritual reality was found insofar as he proved himself obedient to the command of God as contained in the law. At the time he firmly believed that the law led to life (See Rom. 7:10 and Gal. 3:21). The seventh chapter of Romans shows how the truth gradually dawned on Paul that instead of producing life, the law was incarcerating him in death. He finally came to the place where he cried, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). Then he answers his own question by stating the greatest discovery of his life: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Paul's birth in the Spirit produced a personal relationship with Christ which brought him from spiritual death into spiritual life. He saw that his hope lay in Christ, not the law. What no human effort could accomplish, he found in a spiritual birth. Paul exulted, "You are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you" (Rom. 8:9).

The New Testament presents a uniform picture of the dynamics involved in Christian conversion.

In the first place, the Holy Spirit brings us into relationship with Christ not because we have managed to achieve sanctification, but in order that we may be sanctified. Christ is the savior of sinners, not the righteous. The Holy Spirit does not wait until we are pure and holy to bring us into union with Christ; He does so in order that we may become pure and holy. He never comes to us in our unregenerate state with the demand, "Get clean!" Rather He comes with an offer, "I take you just as you are. Receive Christ and live."

After we have entered into a life-giving relationship with Christ, we are then called to a life of sanctification and holiness. We must keep in mind, however, that the Alpha point of Christian experience is Christ seeking us. And He seeks us in our sinfulness, because there is none righteous (Rom. 3:10). In this connection we must remember that the Church that Christ is presently sanctifying is not an "ideal" Church free of blemishes, but a Church consisting of imperfect people, yet on the way.

Secondly, the nature of our union with Christ is unique, quite superior to any other union. The Bible gives analogies of our union with Christ, using such terms as vine and branch, husband and wife, head and body, father and son. But none of these analogies can possibly express or explain our being in Christ. As splendid and wonderful as these relationships are, our union with Christ through the Holy Spirit is much more wonderful. In a mystical way the Holy Spirit infuses the divine life of the resurrected Christ into our human personalities. Paul described our relationship with Christ in this way: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (II Cor. 4:7).

The New Testament writers generally, and Paul particularly, insist that the Christian life begins to flower when the Holy Spirit effects the miracle of Christian conversion. All else in the Christian life is predicated upon that divine-human encounter wrought in human life through the gracious working of the Holy Spirit in what Jesus called the new birth.

The power of the Holy Spirit provides a "plus" in the Christian's relationship with Christ that is not present in any other type of human relationship. It is qualitatively different from any other relationship. The Spirit makes available to the Christian the divine power of God for the living of daily life. This power affects our relationships to our neighbor, our vocation, and our world. As Luke states it in a classic passage, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you . . ."

(Acts 1:8). In speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus stated, "It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail . . ." (John 6:63). The Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian does more than merely inspire him to obey Christ and to live a "godly life." The Spirit mediates the divine life of Christ to the Christian, enabling him to live a life that is pleasing to God. He authors a relationship totally unique, quite superior to any other relationship.

And thirdly, the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Christians in a dynamic and relational way, not just in a static and theoretical way. Another way of saying the same thing is to say, "The Christian's **condition** is altered as well as his **relationship**."

While the Christian's union with Christ coincides with a covenant relationship to Christ, it is not identical with a covenant. To be sure, our human spirits are not absorbed into or subsumed under the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, our bond with Christ carries with it the benefit of partaking of the Holy Spirit in a real way.

Since the Christian life is dynamic and not static, the Christian ought constantly to grow, gain new insights, receive new illumination and new experiences. Peter emphasized that a part of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to impart new dreams and new visions, leading the Christian to experience an unfolding drama of realized redemption in wider and wider dimensions of human life.

Working in our lives, the Holy Spirit gives power to the words of Christian preaching (I Cor. 2:4, I Thess. 1:5, Rom. 15:16). He guides the Church in its life (Acts 6:3) and supplies all the differing gifts which are necessary for its common life (I Cor. 12:4-30). The Holy Spirit leads the Church into all the truth (John 16:13). He guides the Church's worship and fellowship (I Cor. 14). To be in Christ, then, is to share in His Spirit, by Whom He was made flesh (Luke 1:35). It is, to use John's phrase, to have "an anointing from the Holy One" (I Jn. 2:20). "And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us" (I Jn. 3:24).

Having received the Spirit of Christ at conversion, Christians have access to the life of the Holy Spirit. The powers of the age to come are at work in us (Acts 2:17-21, 33, Rom. 8:11, 23, Heb. 6:4, 5). God through His Holy Spirit constantly seeks to perfect that which He has begun in us. By the Holy Spirit we are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13, 4:30, II Cor. 1:22) and in Him we have the foretaste, the earnest, and the first fruits of a new humanity and a new age.

These aspects of Christian life are but some of the implications of being in Christ through His Spirit. The grandest event in human existence is to come to know Jesus Christ through the miracle of the birth of the Holy Spirit. Once in Christ, God through the Holy Spirit begins the perfecting of the believer to the end that he will glorify God.

2. Another important work of the Holy Spirit is to bring persons into a creative and harmonious relationship to the Body of Christ, the Church. Man is made for community and belonging. Some observers of human behavior attribute man's longing for community to fear, survival, or the need for goods and services. These doubtless are a part of the reason that man is by nature a "joiner." But there seems to be a deeper reason that man reaches out for fellowship with others. Something within the nature of man, grounded in the *imago Dei*, urges him to stretch beyond himself for fellowship both with God and with God's creation.

The supreme provision for fellowship with God is, as we have seen, the new life in Christ wrought by the Holy Spirit, God's supreme provision for man's essential need of fellowship with his fellow man is found, I believe, in *koinonia*, or community within the Body of Christ, the Church.

Obviously Christianity is private and personal; but it is also corporate. The Christian relates upwardly to God and outwardly to others. In the Christian understanding of **Church**, the Christian belongs to all others who also belong to Christ. Phillips translates Romans 14:8: "The truth is that we neither live or die as self-contained units." In a special way, God reveals Himself through community or in what Bonhoeffer called "life together." When Christians are converted to Christ they are grafted into the one indivisible body of Christ, the Holy Catholic Church. The Holy Spirit both brings us into this unity and He helps us discover the implications and overtones of what it means to be a brother or sister to every Christian believer throughout the world.

The Christian inherits a special relationship with, and responsibility to, fellow believers who are also in Christ. Loss of fellowship and quarrelling among Christian believers are contrary to the work of the Holy Spirit. When true Christians are not in fellowship with each other the reason does not lie in the Holy Spirit because where the Spirit of the Lord rules, unity exists.

An important part of the work of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is to rectify present disunity and to lead the Church to manifest her unity around a common Lord. It appears from this writer's point of view that one of the obvious activities of the Holy Spirit in present-day

spiritual renewal is that He is replacing the bitter doctrinal and ecclesiastical strife of the post-Reformation era with a new sense of catholicity and brotherhood. This is even more significant when we observe that this growing sense of the unity of the Spirit is developing at the grass roots, among laymen and on a large scale. We are rediscovering the New Testament emphasis upon the unity of the Body of Christ. Perhaps one of the significant areas of study in the years ahead will be the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the study of ecclesiology.

A radical biblical ecclesiology is revolutionary—as are most aspects of the Gospel. In this connection, perhaps our main problem is that we have failed to recognize that carnal attitudes and self will have been a part of professional Church leaders as much as they have been a part of the laity.

One finds it easier to forgive churchmen for the man-made divisions which they have imposed upon their respective flocks when we remember that a cautious spirit has often been the result of the heavy burden of pastoral responsibility. It is right to be on guard for wolves in sheep's clothing who would do harm to the flock of God. But human nature being what it is, we have often tended to erect our own criteria for judging other Christians. Having our particular criteria for deciding with whom we can fellowship as brothers in the Lord releases us from the more demanding requirements of spiritual discernment and redeeming love. Man-made rules (justified by prooftexts) give us a false security; and they can easily blind us to the fact that the Holy Spirit is free and sovereign, often creating new wineskins where older ones have not remained sufficiently pliable for His creative working. We sometimes forget that the Holy Spirit promises to the Church the necessary gifts by which His working can be discerned (I Cor. 12:10). The Holy Spirit, when allowed right of way, is creating a Church not ruled by the letter of written codes, but by the Holy Spirit Himself (II Cor. 3:4-6).

The basic principle is, of course, not hard to determine from Scripture. "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God" (I Jn. 4:2,3). Church history demonstrates, to be sure, that there is still room for error even with this safeguard. Nonetheless, the true discernment of the spirit can only come as the body of Christians lives in the Spirit. And in the Church there is only one body and one Spirit just as we were called to one hope (Eph. 4:4).

Whenever we seek to develop any sort of security against false brethren that can function apart from the present, active working of the Spirit Himself, we are living not by the Spirit but by the flesh. Orthodoxy is no substitute for the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not an abstract doctrine, but a living, vitalizing Presence. He is not a substitute for a resurrected Lord, but the divine Agent of His living presence.

When we allow the Holy Spirit to bring us into a creative and harmonious relationship with the Body of Christ, enormous benefits accrue to us.

1. We are greatly enriched by the multitude of Christian traditions that are but partial expressions of the Tradition. At the same time, we are also enabled to contribute to the Church our own unique understanding of Christian faith and life.

2. The Body of Christ functions harmoniously and it edifies all believers when they are in the unity of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leaves no room in the Church for feelings of inferiority or pride. There are differing functions in the body of Christ, but there are no differences of status. To understand that the Church is one Body of the Lord of which we are all members is to be in a position to allow the Holy Spirit to erase from among us all traces of carnal competition. In the Church no one is "second class" and no one is superior. There are no underdogs in the Church nor are there any super-Christians. We are all one in the Spirit.

3. When we live in community in the fellowship of the Spirit our joys are increased and our burdens are made lighter. Mutual sharing replaces an uninvolved provincialism. We mature in Christ best in the community of the Spirit. God's promises are largely to His covenant people and to His Church. We participate in them as we participate in the fellowship of other Christians believers.

The Church is more than a witness to Christ; it is also the Body of Christ. It is not only a reporter of God's mighty acts of redemption; it is itself the bearer of God's redeeming grace as an object of His ministry of saving love. In the Book of Acts, to lie to the Church was to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3) and to be in the Church was to be in Christ.

3. The third major work of the Holy Spirit is to make of each Christian a living witness to the glory of God the Father. A major misunderstanding of the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in maturing Christians persists both inside and outside the Church. That misunder-

standing is based on the notion that Christianity produces a bland sameness or sterile uniformity in people's lives. Unfortunately we in the Church have sometimes preferred the "safe" Christian to the creative Christian. Often, in the interests of discipling persons, we seek to mold them into identical patterns after the fashion of our particular group's perception of the Christian life. We should instead encourage them to be taught by the Holy Spirit and shaped by Him into the full development of their own creative uniqueness.

The Holy Spirit never works the same in any two persons. We have often frustrated His working by drawing up blackboard models of "the work of the Holy Spirit." In attempting to force others into our categories we stand in the way of the Spirit Himself. Sadly, the Church has often insisted that her Davids wear the armor of Saul. This unbiblical approach has produced frustrated persons, guilty persons, and resentful persons.

For a biblical illustration of the variety of the working of the Holy Spirit look at Acts. The converts in Cornelius' house received the Holy Spirit before they were baptized in water, and those in Samaria were baptized in water before they received the Holy Spirit. Christian leaders in the early Church were wise enough to allow for variety. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "There are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires . . ." (I Cor. 12:6).

To be sure, there are common characteristics which belong to all Christians. In certain areas there is only one Christian response possible. Christians should be uniform in that each one should manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit as listed in Galatians 5 (v. 22, 23). Certainly, the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit in this connection is to fill all Christians with Holy love.

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit works in each life in a unique way because each person is a unique individual. God has given to every person special talents and unique abilities, and He has for each life a different plan. As the Holy Spirit works individually in the lives of Christians He does so in order to produce a witness to the glory of God the Father. Paul wrote to some first-century Christians, "As for you, it is plain that you are a letter that has come from Christ . . . a letter written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God . . ." (I Cor. 3:2, NEB).

We glorify God most as we manifest the divine blend of our own personality with that of the Holy Spirit. God calls us to manifest our Spirit-filled individuality in the context of daily life. For some, daily

life means the Christian pastorate; for others, it means the shop, the office, the class room, or the farm. None of us has exactly the same vocation. But each one of us does have a divine call to be fully Christian and fully human at every level of our existence. The Holy Spirit beckons us to a continuing and growing relationship to Christ. And as we respond in obedience to the creative, customized, personal ministry of the Holy Spirit we grow into mature "epistles" seen and read by others.

Naturally, none of us in our life time fully realizes his entire potential, John wrote, "Here and now, dear friends, we are God's children; what we shall be has not yet been disclosed, but we know that when it is disclosed we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is" (I Jn. 3:2, NEB). Although Christians are not yet perfect (Phil. 3:12), they are nevertheless on the way! And the continuing growth is part of the joy of being a disciple of Christ. As the Christian continues to respond to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit continues to release his uniqueness as He fills him with His Spirit of sanctity and power. The Holy Spirit applies personally the promise of our Lord, "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Becoming at once fully Christian and fully human rests not in following a program; it results from a relationship to a Person, That Person, of course, is Jesus Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ and to reveal Him to human beings at deeper and deeper levels. Telling His disciples of a soon-to-come Pentecost, Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit. "I have yet many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:12-15).

The Holy Spirit remains God's primary agent of making effective the redeeming and liberating ministry of Christ in our hearts. Our very lives must be lived out not by human might or secular power, but by Christ's Spirit. To have Christ's Spirit is to have Christ Himself. For this reason Paul urges the Ephesians, "Be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). The translation might literally read, "Be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit."

No better advice can be given to the Church in our day or in any other day. To be full of the Holy Spirit is to experience Christ within and to enter a dimension of existence described by our Lord as the abundant life.