

First steps to personhood

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From John Main OSB, *The Spirit, WORD into SILENCE* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), pp. 37-39.

The first step to personhood . . . is to allow ourselves to be loved. It was to facilitate this that the Holy Spirit was sent into the human heart, to touch it, to awaken it, to draw our minds into its redemptive light. The sending of the Spirit was a resurrection event and so continues as freshly today as it did late that Sunday evening, as St John tells us, when the disciples were together behind locked doors and Jesus came and breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.

[Our] natural lethargy and self-evasiveness, our reluctance to allow ourselves to be loved are, like the locked doors, no impediments to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been sent into the human heart, and it lives out the divine mystery there for as long as God sustains us in being. Even in the heart of the utterly evil man, were there such a person, the Holy Spirit would still be crying: Abba Father, without ceasing. [. . .]

We begin with a dim awareness of the stirring of the Spirit in our heart, the presence of another by which we know ourselves. In awakening to its full reality, in listening to our heart, we awaken to the living proof of our faith justifying that first dim awareness, that

first hope. And, as St Paul told the Romans: This proof is the ground of hope. Such a hope is no mockery because God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us.

The intoxication of Paul's language is the intoxication of his personal awakening to the Reality of the Spirit, to the experience of the joy released, pressed down and flowing over, which Jesus preached and communicates through His Spirit. It is the intoxication of prayer.

After meditation: Hildegard of Bingen, Antiphon for the Holy Spirit, in WOMEN MYSTICS, ed. Carol Lee Flinders (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 17.

The Spirit of God
Is a life that bestows life,
root of the world-tree
and wind in its boughs.
Scrubbing out sins,
She rubs oil into wounds.

She is glistening life,
alluring all praise,
all-awakening, all-resurrecting.

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