

CANTATE / THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Text: St. John 16:5-15

ALLELUIA! CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

I have a little bit of news for you that I hope serves to bring you great joy: you are not of this world! That is correct, you are not of this world; by the grace of God the FATHER, through faith in the sacrificial death and triumphant resurrection of God the SON for the forgiveness of your sins, you have been taken out of this world and made members of the family of God. You are the chosen, that is, you have been called by CHRIST to do things the world will not do, indeed, things the world is incapable of doing. You have been called by our LORD to glorify God through love and service to your neighbor.

Thus, you are salt and light, a gleaming city on a hill, your light, the light of CHRIST JESUS, shining into the darkness as a beacon of hope to the suffering of this world. Your light shines into the darkness singing a *“new song,”* a song which speaks of the *“marvelous things”* our LORD has done. For *“His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. He has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”*

Our LORD’s *“victory”* is made known to us through the work of the HOLY SPIRIT. It is through the work of the HOLY SPIRIT that we are made to see JESUS. Through His work, and His work alone, we come to understand the Words of our LORD, for the HOLY SPIRIT, the COMFORTER, who proceeds from the FATHER and the SON, opens our eyes to clearly see our LORD, opens our ears that we clearly hear our LORD, and opens our hearts that we believe what we see and hear of Him. There is no alternate way in this life to see and know JESUS. It is the HOLY SPIRIT alone that makes known His salvation.

Thus, the true work of the HOLY SPIRIT is that of sanctification, or more simply put, to make us holy by bringing us to faith; thus His Name, ***“HOLY SPIRIT.”*** For He is the One that has made us holy and keeps us in the blessed state of sanctification, or holiness. It is for this reason we confess with the whole Christian Church on earth, *“I believe in the HOLY SPIRIT, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, forgiveness of sins, resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.”*

But what does this confession mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in JESUS CHRIST, my LORD, or come to Him; but the HOLY SPIRIT has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith;

even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with JESUS CHRIST in the true faith;

in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and will at the Last Day raise me and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in CHRIST eternal life.

This is most certainly true. (Martin Luther's explanation to the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed)

That is what we confess and that is what our confession means, but when you hear the words, "*HOLY SPIRIT*," what is it that comes to your mind? What is the picture that takes shape in your mind's "eye"?

Sadly, the picture one sees when talk of the *HOLY SPIRIT* pops up in casual conversation is often distorted. What often comes to mind is the all holy televangelist or radio evangelist, faith healers, speaking in tongues, special revelation, worship that gives you that entertained and feel good feeling, and that ever so popular personal revelation, of the "*God spoke to me*," or "*God laid it on my heart*," or even "*God revealed to me that He wants me to...*" kind of talk. But this distorted image of the Third Person of the Godhead sadly misses the mark by a wide margin and, therefore, misses the real work of the *HOLY SPIRIT* and lays waste to the Gospel of *CHRIST*.

You see, the real work of the *HOLY SPIRIT* is the revelation of the redemption our *LORD JESUS CHRIST* won for us through His life, death, and resurrection. It is really that simple! The *HOLY SPIRIT* preaches *CHRIST* into us giving to us the benefits of His saving work by preaching God's Word through our ears and into our hearts that we believe and be made holy. As it is written, and you have so often heard, "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*"

Therefore, without the preaching of the Gospel by the *HOLY SPIRIT*, you could know nothing about *JESUS* and what He has done for you. Without the preaching of the Gospel by the *HOLY SPIRIT*, you could not believe in *CHRIST* and therefore receive the benefits of His work. All *JESUS'* work would have been in vain and we would still be lost in our sins because His work would remain hidden from us and lost forever. Where the *HOLY SPIRIT* does not cause the Gospel to be preached and does not awaken the understanding of it in the heart, all is lost. (Luther)

In order to give us the treasures won for us by *JESUS*, God has caused His Word to be written down in the pages of Holy Scripture by His faithful prophets, apostles, and disciples, in order to be preached and taught to us by faithful men in the Office of the Holy Ministry, and administered to us in the blessed Sacraments which *CHRIST* Himself has ordained.

These are the means, or vehicles, by which we are called, gathered, and enlightened; *these* are the means by which we are made holy and kept in the one true faith. Therefore, being made holy is nothing other than being brought to the *LORD CHRIST* in faith to receive the treasures of His blessed work to which we could not have come by our own reason or strength.

Let this, then, stand as a warning to you, for where CHRIST is not preached, there is no HOLY SPIRIT to create, call, and gather the Christian Church, apart from which no one can come to the LORD CHRIST. Where there is no HOLY SPIRIT, there is no CHRIST; there is no God, and therefore, no Christian Church. As Saint Paul writes to the Christian congregation in Corinth, *“No one knows the things of God but the SPIRIT of God.”*

These vehicles, or marks of the true Christian Church, are the things through which the HOLY SPIRIT works—preaching, absolution, Baptism, and the LORD’s Supper. Everything else in the Church is secondary at best or meaningless at worst.

In Baptism, sinners die with CHRIST and are buried with Him into judgment, that just as He was raised from the dead by the glory of the FATHER, they are also raised with Him to walk in newness of life—real and abundant life, everlasting life. It is there, in Holy Baptism, where water and Word are poured over you, that you were separated from the world and made a child of God, because it is there that you received the HOLY SPIRIT who comes to you with all of gifts of JESUS’ Gospel: victory over death and devil, forgiveness of sin, God’s grace; literally the entire Gospel in CHRIST.

God makes Christians by water and Word, as a gift, such that faith and life do not come by the ears of God being filled with our words of promise, for those words are untrue, unsure, uncertain, and even empty. Nor does faith and life come by any work or merit on our part. Faith and life come by hearing the Word and promises of God and believing them. The Word and promises of God are most certainly true and unbreakable, for God does not lie.

How does the HOLY SPIRIT use the Word of God to create faith and life? He creates faith and life by convicting you with respect to sin, because of your unbelief; convicting you of righteousness, because even the holiest of your good works are but filthy rags; convicting you of judgment because Satan has already been condemned. In all of this the HOLY SPIRIT preaches the Word of God into the ears of the unbelieving and the half-believing that they might receive the life and righteousness of CHRIST.

This Gospel the HOLY SPIRIT preaches into your ears:

JESUS CHRIST, true God, begotten of the FATHER in eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is your LORD. He has redeemed you, a lost and condemned creature. He has purchased and freed you from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with His holy, precious Blood and with His innocent suffering and death.
(Martin Luther’s explanation to the Second Article of the Apostle’s Creed)

The HOLY SPIRIT declares it is by the Blood of CHRIST that you are made holy.

The HOLY SPIRIT tells you, your “goodness” will not get you into heaven. He tells you, you could never be “good” enough. In fact, on your own, you cannot be “good” at all. But, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”*

The HOLY SPIRIT tells you, that loving the world is the opposite of loving God. He tells you that there is a great difference between believing in CHRIST and believing that JESUS is the CHRIST.

You have heard JESUS say that He came to seek and save the lost and the condemned of this world. He said, *“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick... For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”* Through the goodness and mercy of God the FATHER, for the sake of His suffering, dying, and rising SON, you need not lift a finger to inherit eternal life. It is yours, as a free gift of God the FATHER for the sake of God the SON, delivered into your ears by the preaching and work of God the HOLY SPIRIT. Therefore, the Church lives and has Her being by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Brothers and sisters in CHRIST, not one of us walked the earth with our LORD JESUS. Therefore, if you wish to see JESUS do not strain your eyes looking for Him, Rather, listen with your ears. For as Saint Mary, the very Mother of God, received CHRIST into her womb by the preaching of the HOLY SPIRIT in her ear, so CHRIST, too, dwells in the depth of your being by the work of the HOLY SPIRIT, who preaches Him into your heart through your ears.

The HOLY SPIRIT’s sole message is JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified for the life of the world. He holds JESUS before us so that we may look upon Him who died for us with the eyes of faith. The HOLY SPIRIT brings JESUS to us in the Words of Holy Scripture read to us from the lectern, preached to us from the pulpit, and given to us with His true Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar.

The HOLY SPIRIT comforts, sustains, and satisfies our hunger for righteousness by placing a bit of bread on our tongue with the words, *“Take, eat, the Body of CHRIST given for you.”* The HOLY SPIRIT comforts, sustains, and satisfies our thirst for righteousness saying, *“Take, drink, the Blood of CHRIST, shed for you.”* The HOLY SPIRIT speaks JESUS’ Words of comfort to us in Holy Absolution. He gives JESUS to us in our loneliness and isolation and despair. He reaches down to each of us with the right hand of God and pours the Waters of Holy Baptism over you in the Name of God, the FATHER, God the SON, and God the HOLY SPIRIT.

All this, and only this is the work of the HOLY SPIRIT. He does not speak of Himself; *“He does not speak with His own authority.”* The HOLY SPIRIT speaks of only that which He hears from the FATHER and the SON and He tells us of things to come. The HOLY SPIRIT speaks words of conviction. Those who reject it are condemned. Those who hear and believe are saved, for the speaking of the HOLY SPIRIT is for the purpose of glorifying CHRIST in order that you be made holy. The HOLY SPIRIT takes of what belongs to JESUS and declares it to you with the words, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AMEN.

✠ ✠ ✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠ ✠ ✠

Rev. Raymond D. Parent II
Our Savior Evangelical Lutheran Church
Crestview, Florida
5/18/25 A&D