

"The Indwelling Spirit"
Parochial and Plain Sermons vol. II sermon 19
St. John Henry Newman
The Feast of Pentecost 1834

"Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."
Romans viii. 9.

1 [Note 1] GOD the Son has graciously vouchsafed to reveal the Father to His creatures
2 from without; God the Holy Ghost, by inward communications. Who can compare these
3 separate works of condescension, either of them being beyond our understanding? We
4 can but silently adore the Infinite Love which encompasses us on every side. The Son
5 of God is called the Word, as declaring His glory throughout created nature, and
6 impressing the evidence of it on every part of it. He has given us to read it in His works
7 of goodness, holiness, and wisdom. He is the Living and Eternal Law of Truth and
8 Perfection, that Image of God's unapproachable Attributes, which men have ever seen
9 by glimpses on the face of the world, felt that it was sovereign, but knew not whether to
10 say it was a fundamental Rule and self-existing Destiny, or the Offspring and Mirror of
11 the Divine Will. Such has He been from the beginning, graciously sent forth from the
12 Father to reflect His glory upon all things, distinct from Him, while mysteriously one with
13 Him; and in due time visiting us with an infinitely deeper mercy, when for our redemption
14 He humbled Himself to take upon Him that fallen nature which He had originally created
15 after His own image.

16 The condescension of the Blessed Spirit is as incomprehensible as that of the Son. He
17 has ever been the secret Presence of God within the Creation: a source of life amid the
18 chaos, bringing out into form and order what was at first shapeless and void, and the
19 voice of Truth in the hearts of all rational beings, tuning them into harmony with the
20 intimations of God's Law, which were externally made to them. Hence He is especially
21 called the "life-giving" Spirit; being (as it were) the Soul of universal nature, the Strength
22 of man and beast, the Guide of faith, the Witness against sin, the inward Light of
23 patriarchs and prophets, the Grace abiding in the Christian soul, and the Lord and Ruler
24 of the Church. Therefore let us ever praise the Father Almighty, who is the first Source
25 of all perfection, in and together with His Co-equal Son and Spirit, through whose
26 gracious ministrations we have been given to see "what manner of love" it is wherewith
27 the Father has loved us.

28 On this Festival I propose, as is suitable, to describe as scripturally as I can, the
29 merciful office of God the Holy Ghost, towards us Christians; and I trust I may do so,
30 with the sobriety and reverence which the subject demands.

31 The Holy Spirit has from the beginning pleaded with man. We read in the Book of
32 Genesis, that, when evil began to prevail all over the earth before the flood, the Lord
33 said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man;" [Gen. vi. 3.] implying that He had
34 hitherto striven with his corruption. Again, when God took to Him a peculiar people, the
35 Holy Spirit was pleased to be especially present with them. Nehemiah says, "Thou

gavest also Thy Good Spirit to instruct them," [Neh. ix. 20.] and Isaiah, "They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit." [Isa. lxiii. 10.] Further, He manifested Himself as the source of various gifts, intellectual and extraordinary, in the Prophets, and others. Thus at the time the Tabernacle was constructed, the Lord filled Bezaleel "with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works" [Exod. xxxi. 3, 4.] in metal, stone, and timber. At another time, when Moses was oppressed with his labours, Almighty God vouchsafed to "take of the Spirit" which was upon him, and to put it on seventy of the elders of Israel, that they might share the burden with him. "And it came to pass, that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease." [Numb. xi. 17, 25.] These texts will be sufficient to remind you of many others, in which the gifts of the Holy Ghost are spoken of under the Jewish covenant. These were great mercies; yet, great as they were, they are as nothing compared with that surpassing grace with which we Christians are honoured; that great privilege of receiving into our hearts, not the mere gifts of the Spirit, but His very presence, Himself, by a real not a figurative indwelling.

When our Lord entered upon His Ministry, He acted as though He were a mere man, needing grace, and received the consecration of the Holy Spirit for our sakes. He became the Christ, or Anointed, that the Spirit might be seen to come from God, and to pass from Him to us. And, therefore, the heavenly Gift is not simply called the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ, that we might clearly understand, that He comes to us from and instead of Christ. Thus St. Paul says, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts;" and our Lord breathed on His Apostles, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and He says elsewhere to them, "If I depart, I will send Him unto you." [Gal. iv. 6. John xx. 22; xvi. 7.] Accordingly this "Holy Spirit of promise" is called "the earnest of our inheritance," "the seal and earnest of an Unseen Saviour;" [Eph. i. 14. 2 Cor. i. 22; v. 5.] being the present pledge of Him who is absent,—or rather more than a pledge, for an earnest is not a mere token which will be taken from us when it is fulfilled, as a pledge might be, but a something in advance of what is one day to be given in full.

This must be clearly understood; for it would seem to follow, that if so, the Comforter who has come instead of Christ, must have vouchsafed to come in the same sense in which Christ came; I mean, that He has come, not merely in the way of gifts, or of influences, or of operations, as He came to the Prophets, for then Christ's going away would be a loss, and not a gain, and the Spirit's presence would be a mere pledge, not an earnest; but He comes to us as Christ came, by a real and personal visitation. I do not say we could have inferred this thus clearly by the mere force of the above cited texts; but it being actually so revealed to us in other texts of Scripture, we are able to see that it may be legitimately deduced from these. We are able to see that the Saviour, when once He entered into this world, never so departed as to suffer things to be as before He came; for He still is with us, not in mere gifts, but by the substitution of His Spirit for Himself, and that, both in the Church and in the souls of individual Christians.

For instance, St. Paul says in the text, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God *dwells in you*." Again, "He shall quicken even your mortal bodies by

His Spirit that *dwelleth* in you." "Know ye not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" "Ye are the Temple of the Living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them." The same Apostle clearly distinguishes between the indwelling of the Spirit, and His actual operations within us, when he says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us;" and again, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." [Rom. viii. 9, 11. 1 Cor. vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Rom. v. 5; viii. 16.]

Here let us observe, before proceeding, what indirect evidence is afforded us in these texts of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. Who can be personally present at once with every Christian, but God Himself? Who but He, not merely ruling in the midst of the Church invisibly, as Michael might keep watch over Israel, or another Angel might be "the Prince of Persia,"—but really taking up His abode as one and the same in many separate hearts, so as to fulfil our Lord's words, that it was expedient that He should depart; Christ's bodily presence, which was limited to place, being exchanged for the manifold spiritual indwelling of the Comforter within us? This consideration suggests both the dignity of our Sanctifier, and the infinite preciousness of His Office towards us.

To proceed: The Holy Ghost, I have said, dwells in body and soul, as in a temple. Evil spirits indeed have power to possess sinners, but His indwelling is far more perfect; for He is all-knowing and omnipresent, He is able to search into all our thoughts, and penetrate into every motive of the heart. Therefore, He pervades us (if it may be so said) as light pervades a building, or as a sweet perfume the folds of some honourable robe; so that, in Scripture language, we are said to be in Him, and He in us. It is plain that such an inhabitation brings the Christian into a state altogether new and marvellous, far above the possession of mere gifts, exalts him inconceivably in the scale of beings, and gives him a place and an office which he had not before. In St. Peter's forcible language, he becomes "partaker of the Divine Nature," and has "power" or authority, as St. John says, "to become the son of God." Or, to use the words of St. Paul, "he is a new creation; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." His rank is new; his parentage and service new. He is "of God," and "is not his own," "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." [2 Pet. i. 4. John i. 12. 2 Cor. v. 17. 1 John iv. 4. 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. 2 Tim. ii. 21.]

This wonderful change from darkness to light, through the entrance of the Spirit into the soul, is called Regeneration, or the New Birth; a blessing which, before Christ's coming, not even Prophets and righteous men possessed, but which is now conveyed to all men freely through the Sacrament of Baptism. By nature we are children of wrath; the heart is sold under sin, possessed by evil spirits; and inherits death as its eternal portion. But by the coming of the Holy Ghost, all guilt and pollution are burned away as by fire, the devil is driven forth, sin, original and actual, is forgiven, and the whole man is consecrated to God. And this is the reason why He is called "the earnest" of that Saviour who died for us, and will one day give us the fulness of His own presence in heaven. Hence, too, He is our "seal unto the day of redemption;" for as the potter moulds the clay, so He impresses the Divine image on us members of the household of

122 God. And His work may truly be called Regeneration; for though the original nature of
123 the soul is not destroyed, yet its past transgressions are pardoned once and for ever,
124 and its source of evil stanchd and gradually dried up by the pervading health and
125 purity which has set up its abode in it. Instead of its own bitter waters, a spring of health
126 and salvation is brought within it; not the mere streams of that fountain, "clear as
127 crystal," which is before the Throne of God [Note 2], but, as our Lord says, "a well of
128 water *in him*," in a man's heart, "springing up into everlasting life." Hence He elsewhere
129 describes the heart as giving forth, not receiving, the streams of grace: "Out of his belly
130 shall flow rivers of Living Water." St. John adds, "this spake He of the Spirit." [John iv.
131 14; vii. 38, 39.]

132 Such is the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost within us, applying to us individually the
133 precious cleansing of Christ's blood in all its manifold benefits. Such is the great
134 doctrine, which we hold as a matter of faith, and without actual experience to verify it to
135 us. Next, I must speak briefly concerning the manner in which the Gift of grace
136 manifests itself in the regenerate soul; a subject which I do not willingly take up, and
137 which no Christian perhaps is ever able to consider without some effort, feeling that he
138 thereby endangers either his reverence towards God, or his humility, but which the
139 errors of this day, and the confident tone of their advocates, oblige us to dwell upon, lest
140 truth should suffer by our silence.

141 1. The heavenly gift of the Spirit fixes the eyes of our mind upon the Divine Author of
142 our salvation. By nature we are blind and carnal; but the Holy Ghost by whom we are
143 new-born, reveals to us the God of mercies, and bids us recognise and adore Him as
144 our Father with a true heart. He impresses on us our Heavenly Father's image, which
145 we lost when Adam fell, and disposes us to seek His presence by the very instinct of
146 our new nature. He gives us back a portion of that freedom in willing and doing, of that
147 uprightness and innocence, in which Adam was created. He unites us to all holy beings,
148 as before we had relationship with evil. He restores for us that broken bond, which,
149 proceeding from above, connects together into one blessed family all that is anywhere
150 holy and eternal, and separates it off from the rebel world which comes to nought. Being
151 then the sons of God, and one with Him, our souls mount up and cry to Him continually.
152 This special characteristic of the regenerate soul is spoken of by St. Paul soon after the
153 text. "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Nor are
154 we left to utter these cries to Him, in any vague uncertain way of our own; but He who
155 sent the Spirit to dwell in us habitually, gave us also a form of words to sanctify the
156 separate acts of our minds. Christ left His sacred Prayer to be the peculiar possession
157 of His people, and the voice of the Spirit. If we examine it, we shall find in it the
158 substance of that doctrine, to which St. Paul has given a name in the passage just
159 quoted. We begin it by using our privilege of calling on Almighty God in express words
160 as "Our Father." We proceed, according to this beginning, in that waiting, trusting,
161 adoring, resigned temper, which children ought to feel; looking towards Him, rather than
162 thinking of ourselves; zealous for His honour rather than fearful about our safety; resting
163 in His present help, not with eyes timorously glancing towards the future. His name, His
164 kingdom, His will, are the great objects for the Christian to contemplate and make his
165 portion, being stable and serene, and "complete in Him," as beseems one who has the

166 gracious presence of His Spirit within him. And, when he goes on to think of himself, he
167 prays, that he may be enabled to have towards others what God has shown towards
168 himself, a spirit of forgiveness and loving-kindness. Thus he pours himself out on all
169 sides, first looking up to catch the heavenly gift, but, when he gains it, not keeping it to
170 himself, but diffusing "rivers of living water" to the whole race of man, thinking of self as
171 little as may be, and desiring ill and destruction to nothing but that principle of
172 temptation and evil, which is rebellion against God;—lastly, ending, as he began, with
173 the contemplation of His kingdom, power, and glory ever-lasting. This is the true "Abba,
174 Father," which the Spirit of adoption utters within the Christian's heart, the infallible
175 voice of Him who "maketh intercession for the Saints in God's way." And if he has at
176 times, for instance, amid trial or affliction, special visitations and comfortings from the
177 Spirit, "plaints unutterable" within him, yearnings after the life to come, or bright and
178 passing gleams of God's eternal election, and deep stirrings of wonder and thankfulness
179 thence following, he thinks too reverently of "the secret of the Lord," to betray (as it
180 were) His confidence, and, by vaunting it to the world, to exaggerate it perchance into
181 more than it was meant to convey: but he is silent, and ponders it as choice
182 encouragement to his soul, meaning something, but he knows not how much.

183 2. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost raises the soul, not only to the thought of God, but
184 of Christ also. St. John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son
185 Jesus Christ." And our Lord Himself, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My
186 Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." [1 John
187 i. 3. John xiv. 23.] Now, not to speak of other and higher ways in which these texts are
188 fulfilled, one surely consists in that exercise of faith and love in the thought of the Father
189 and Son, which the Gospel, and the Spirit revealing it, furnish to the Christian. The Spirit
190 came especially to "glorify" Christ; and vouchsafes to be a shining light within the
191 Church and the individual Christian, reflecting the Saviour of the world in all His
192 perfections, all His offices, all His works. He came for the purpose of unfolding what was
193 yet hidden, whilst Christ was on earth; and speaks on the house-tops what was
194 delivered in closets, disclosing Him in the glories of His transfiguration, who once had
195 no comeliness in His outward form, and was but a man of sorrows and acquainted with
196 grief. First, He inspired the Holy Evangelists to record the life of Christ, and directed
197 them which of His words and works to select, which to omit; next, He commented (as it
198 were) upon these, and unfolded their meaning in the Apostolic Epistles. The birth, the
199 life, the death and resurrection of Christ, has been the text which He has illuminated. He
200 has made history to be doctrine; telling us plainly, whether by St. John or St. Paul, that
201 Christ's conception and birth was the real Incarnation of the Eternal Word,—His life,
202 "God manifest in the Flesh,"—His death and resurrection, the Atonement for sin, and
203 the Justification of all believers. Nor was this all: he continued His sacred comment in
204 the formation of the Church, superintending and overruling its human instruments, and
205 bringing out our Saviour's words and works, and the Apostles' illustrations of them, into
206 acts of obedience and permanent Ordinances, by the ministry of Saints and Martyrs.
207 Lastly, He completes His gracious work by conveying this system of Truth, thus varied
208 and expanded, to the heart of each individual Christian in whom He dwells. Thus He
209 vouchsafes to edify the whole man in faith and holiness: "casting down imaginations
210 and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into

211 captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." [2 Cor. x. 5.] By His wonder-working
212 grace all things tend to perfection. Every faculty of the mind, every design, pursuit,
213 subject of thought, is hallowed in its degree by the abiding vision of Christ, as Lord,
214 Saviour, and Judge. All solemn, reverent, thankful, and devoted feelings, all that is
215 noble, all that is choice in the regenerate soul, all that is self-denying in conduct, and
216 zealous in action, is drawn forth and offered up by the Spirit as a living sacrifice to the
217 Son of God. And, though the Christian is taught not to think of himself above his
218 measure, and dare not boast, yet he is also taught that the consciousness of the sin
219 which remains in him, and infects his best services, should not separate him from God,
220 but lead him to Him who can save. He reasons with St. Peter, "To whom should he go?"
221 and, without daring to decide, or being impatient to be told how far he is able to consider
222 as his own every Gospel privilege in its fulness, he gazes on them all with deep thought
223 as the Church's possession, joins her triumphant hymns in honour of Christ, and listens
224 wistfully to her voice in inspired Scripture, the voice of the Bride calling upon and blest
225 in the Beloved.

226 3. St. John adds, after speaking of "our fellowship with the Father and His Son:" "These
227 things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." What is fulness of joy but *peace*?
228 Joy is tumultuous only when it is not full; but peace is the privilege of those who are
229 "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." "Thou
230 wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in
231 Thee." [Isa. xxvi. 3.] It is peace, springing from trust and innocence, and then
232 overflowing in love towards all around him. What is the effect of mere animal ease and
233 enjoyment, but to make a man pleased with everything which happens? "A merry heart
234 is a perpetual feast;" and such is peculiarly the blessing of a soul rejoicing in the faith
235 and fear of God. He who is anxious, thinks of himself, is suspicious of danger, speaks
236 hurriedly, and has no time for the interests of others; he who lives in peace is at leisure,
237 wherever his lot is cast. Such is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, whether in Jew
238 or Greek, bond or free. He Himself perchance in His mysterious nature, is the Eternal
239 Love whereby the Father and the Son have dwelt in each other, as ancient writers have
240 believed; and what He is in heaven, that He is abundantly on earth. He lives in the
241 Christian's heart, as the never-failing fount of charity, which is the very sweetness of the
242 living waters. For where He is, "there is liberty" from the tyranny of sin, from the dread,
243 which the natural man feels, of an offended, unreconciled Creator. Doubt, gloom,
244 impatience have been expelled; joy in the Gospel has taken their place, the hope of
245 heaven and the harmony of a pure heart, the triumph of self-mastery, sober thoughts,
246 and a contented mind. How can charity towards all men fail to follow, being the mere
247 affectionateness of innocence and peace? Thus the Spirit of God creates in us the
248 simplicity and warmth of heart which children have, nay, rather the perfections of His
249 heavenly hosts, high and low being joined together in His mysterious work; for what are
250 implicit trust, ardent love, abiding purity, but the mind both of little children and of the
251 adoring Seraphim!

252 Thoughts, such as these, will affect us rightly, if they make us fear and be watchful,
253 while we rejoice. They cannot surely do otherwise; for the mind of a Christian, as I have
254 been attempting to describe it, is not so much what we have, as what we ought to have.

255 To look, indeed, after dwelling on it, upon the multitude of men who have been baptized
256 in Christ's name, is too serious a matter, and we need not force ourselves to do so. We
257 need not do so, further than to pray for them, and to protest and strive against what is
258 evil among them; for as to the higher and more solemn thought, how persons, set apart
259 individually and collectively, as Temples of Truth and Holiness, should become what
260 they seem to be, and what their state is in consequence in God's sight, is a question
261 which it is a great blessing to be allowed to put from us as not our concern. It is our
262 concern only to look to ourselves, and to see that, as we have received the gift, we
263 "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption;"
264 remembering that "if any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy." This
265 reflection and the recollection of our many backslidings, will ever keep us, please God,
266 from judging others, or from priding ourselves on our privileges. Let us but consider how
267 we have fallen from the light and grace of our Baptism. Were we now what that Holy
268 Sacrament made us, we might ever "go on our way rejoicing;" but having sullied our
269 heavenly garments, in one way or other, in a greater or less degree (God knoweth! and
270 our own consciences too in a measure), alas! the Spirit of adoption has in part receded
271 from us, and the sense of guilt, remorse, sorrow, and penitence must take His place.
272 We must renew our confession, and seek afresh our absolution day by day, before we
273 dare call upon God as "our Father," or offer up Psalms and Intercessions to Him. And,
274 whatever pain and affliction meets us through life, we must take it as a merciful penance
275 imposed by a Father upon erring children, to be borne meekly and thankfully, and as
276 intended to remind us of the weight of that infinitely greater punishment, which was our
277 desert by nature, and which Christ bore for us on the Cross.

278 Notes

279 1. The Feast of Pentecost.

280 2. Rev. iv. 6. Ps. xlv. 4.