



Of Seeds and Flowers



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William R. Pfeiffer – Director

Mary's Field, Ltd. - PO Box 99 - Hebron, CT 06248 - 860.530.1253 - support@marysfieldltd.com

HOW IS YOUR SPIRIT?

A Japanese man was taking lessons to become a Catholic. The priest asked him at the beginning of one session, "Are there any doctrines or ideas with which you are having difficulty?" The man answered, 'The All High Father, of Him, I understand. The Lord, High Brother Jesus, Him I understand. But just who is that Honorable Bird?' The Holy Spirit, often depicted as a dove, does cause difficulty for many Christians. At the Last Supper the Apostles were very upset when they learned that Jesus was going to leave them. Quickly, Jesus firmly responds, "It is TO YOUR ADVANTAGE that I go because, if I go, I will send the Holy Spirit to you." BIG, BIG, BIG GIFT! Jesus thought that it was very important.

The first gift of the Spirit is given in baptism, and then later, by adult choice, a further out-pouring in Confirmation, but too often it doesn't seem to make a difference in many people's lives. This was true for Cindy and me until one day in 1969 we heard about the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, greatly desired it, and had friends pray over us for it. The results: Immediately prayer became sweet, the Scriptures came alive, it became easier to love and forgive, preaching and teaching came alive and for me an awareness of God's presence in me that has never left. BIG, BIG gift!

I share the following story with some mild apprehension because we live in such an unbelieving age and such a story can seem so "over the top" that it will be rejected outright. On the other hand maybe it will be a moment of grace that will inflame your heart with a desire to have some of this power in your own spiritual life. St. Philip Neri, as a young man, used to spend days praying in the catacombs of St. Sebastian. One day he had a remarkable experience that is detailed in the book, "Philip Neri, the Fire of Joy". "In the catacombs of St. Sebastian something happened that can rightly be called Philip's 'Pentecost'." "In 1544 Philip was in a small room in the catacombs, praying with special devotion to the Holy Spirit shortly before Pentecost. 'It was habitual with Philip to pray each day to the Holy Spirit, and with great humility to ask Her for Her gifts and graces.' As he was thus praying again with great devotion one day, 'he suddenly felt himself divinely filled with the power of the Spirit with such force that his heart began to palpitate within his body and to be inflamed with such love that, his nature being unaccustomed to such a palpitation of the heart, he indicated that he was completely unable to bear it' ... This experience of God's love gave Philip an unbounded joy, 'a gladness all of divine love.' From this time on he was so on fire with the Spirit that he would have to read "comic books" to calm himself before celebrating the Eucharist.

His body radiated an amazing amount of heat so that even in the winter he had to leave his cassock unbuttoned. When he died physicians found that his ribs were protruding because the powerful, loving beat of his heart separated the cartilage from his ribs. Love unleashed.

Isn't this an incredible story of how God's love can so powerfully fill our lives? Wouldn't you want to share in some of this life, be it even at a less gifted or powerful level? The "Good News" is: God wants more for you than you want for yourself and He is willing to give you the POWER to achieve it! The Christian life cannot, CANNOT be lived by will power- this is why so many Christians fail - but *only by Spirit power*. Who of us is able to "daily wash the feet of the brother or sister", or forgive your enemy, or "love as He has loved us" using only our own human power? We need the power of the Holy Spirit. How else can we explain the life and the incredible accomplishments of Mother Teresa?

Pentecost is coming. Ask for a further release of the Spirit in your life so that you cannot **Just know**, but **EXPERIENCE** the power of God's love in your life. The following prayers may be of help: Continued on last page...

A DROP OF RAIN...A BIT OF SUN

THE DREAM ME, THE REAL ME.

"For me to be a saint means to be myself. Therefore the growth in sanctity and the process of being saved is in fact the process of finding out who I am and discovering my true self. One of the works of the Spirit is to "be revealer" -to let you know about the real you! Before coming to know the true self one must confront the false self that one has usually spent a lifetime constructing and nourishing." Quote from Thomas Merton, Trappist monk, "New Seeds of Contemplation"

The Dream Me, The Real Me: Have you ever thought about how you are two people, the DREAM you and the REAL you. I have. The dream me does everything perfectly. I am the perfect husband, perfect father, perfect counselor, perfect teacher, perfect Christian, the perfect pray-er, I cut the grass perfectly, I paint the house perfectly, I brush my hair perfectly, I only read perfect books etc. etc. What a guy!! Cindy, my wife, often chides me about my need to be perfect by saying, "Bill you are so perfect that you are even PERFECTLY IMPERFECT." How true! Good wife! Wise wife!

Then, there is the REAL me. The real me that isn't always the perfect husband or father; the real me that is sometimes the perfect counselor and sometimes not; sometimes I'm the perfect teacher and sometimes not so perfect; sometimes I cut the grass perfectly and sometimes crooked or put the white paint on the green trim or don't read the perfect books. This is REALLY who I am.

The dream me is a tyrant. The dream me is like a monkey on my back. He pushes me around always demanding the perfect performance, the perfect job. The dream me is never satisfied. He always keeps me unhappy, in constant tension. I even named my dream me. I call him Alexander, after Alexander the Great, because I can "conquer all things" just like Alexander.

I'm always fighting with Alexander to leave me alone, to stop pushing me around, to stop being such a bully. Sometimes we have some rather strong conversations. "Get out of my life" kind of conversations. "Why are you doing this to me?" The Alexander syndrome afflicts mostly men but it is growing among women as more and more enter the workplace.

I've learned over the years that the only reason the dream me has any power or control in my life is because I don't have enough humble, wholesome, truthful, deep self love. I have to know and believe in my goodness. I AM GOOD. When I am comfortable with my own goodness Alexander doesn't have a chance to push me around. I no longer have a compulsive need to perform, to accomplish, to be perfect. -to live in words and minds of others. I've also come to realize that not even God can love the dream me because the dream me doesn't exist. God can love only the real me - the me with all of my warts, flaws, weaknesses, sinfulness. And so I have to constantly be falling in love with and be in love with the REAL me if I am going to find peace and happiness. The Bible says, "You shall love your neighbor, HOW? -"as yourself."

Who runs your life? The DREAM you? -or, the REAL you? You have to be able to wrap your arms around yourself and say, "I like me." "It is good to be me."

"God made ME and God doesn't make junk." IT'S TRUE IT'S TRUE; IT'S REALLY TRUE!! Stop those "bad" thoughts.

"God loves ME." IT'S TRUE; IT'S TRUE; IT'S REALLY TRUE! Stop those "bad" thoughts.

"I am GOOD." IT'S TRUE; IT'S TRUE; IT'S REALLY TRUE! Stop those "bad" thoughts.

Say these words (just the essential words) over and over, slowly about 10 times until they take root in your heart. The moment you truly discover you are loved and loveable (especially by God), **apart from the things you do**, your spiritual life will fly.

He takes us as we are and makes us more than we can imagine.

O God, help me to believe the truth about myself, no matter how beautiful it is.

VISION AND REALITY

The year 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg, thus beginning the Protestant Reformation. The theses contained some genuine truth and the Catholic leadership of the time should have listened and dialogued with greater humility and openness. - and maybe Martin would have been a bit more patient with his call for reform which totally changed the religious landscape.

Looking back I wonder how Martin would react to the recent report from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity that reports the now there are 45,000 divided Christian denominations around the world? Would Martin be surprised that the Reformation has been ongoing, and churches have been divorcing one another for 500 years? What would he think of the ecumenical movement that discovered Christians have more things in common than their differences? What would Martin Luther think about the craziness of Henry VIII who was encouraged by the changes taking place on the 16th century European continent?



It is time to seriously re-stitch the seamless garment of Jesus? The precious Last Supper words: "May they be ONE as you Father, are in me, and I in you; I pray that they may be ONE in us, that the **world may believe** that you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be ONE, as we are ONE- I living in them, you living in me- that their UNITY may be complete." John 19: 21. Pray and encourage ecumenism and unity whenever you can.

Speaking of divorce, "Divorce is what's really kicking the hell out of American society," William V. Bennett wrote recently. A new study from the Public Religion Research Institute links the decline of many churches to the high divorce rate. The study found that 35% of people raised by divorced parents consider themselves religiously unaffiliated. Many children lose faith in their church when their parents get divorced.

The study concluded: When a couple divorces, one or both of them are also likely to divorce their church and go to another church, or stop going altogether. MORAL: It's in the interest of all churches, if they wish to survive, to make an effort to restore the concept and the reality of the sanctity of marriage.

When I was a young person, I prayed, "God give me the grace to change the whole world and then I will be happy." When, in middle age, I prayed, "God give me the grace to change my spouse, my children and relatives and then I will be happy." When I became an old person, I prayed, "Lord, **give me the grace to change myself** and, if I had done that in the first place, I would have made a greater difference".



In spite of the above: Remember to pray each night for one minute at 9 PM EST for our country to return to genuine freedom, truth, solid marriage and family values, in general, Godly ways.

I believe that each human being has a vision of a new world, a world different from the one in which we are actually living, a world free from the self inflicted pain and frustration we're daily forced to endure. Jesus certainly dreamed of a better world, different from the one in which He lived. Millions will be praying with you! May the Spirit penetrate and reveal all that is being done in darkness. "I am the **light of the world**. *No follower of mine shall walk in darkness*, no, **he shall possess the light of life**." John 8:12. We are CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT!

"To get nations back on their feet, we must first get down on our knees." Billy Graham



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SPEAKING SOFTLY

Come Lord Jesus

Jesus, I don't like the way I am. I've tried to live independently of you. I've tried to run my own life and I just haven't succeeded. I'm not very loving; I'm not very peaceful. I'm not at all the kind of person I would really like to be. I've left you out of my life. I'm sorry that I have hurt so many people and failed so many others-including myself. I don't want to be that way anymore. I ask you to forgive me and heal me; I need you and I want to share my life with you. Jesus, I accept you as my Lord and my Savior. Come into my heart and share your life with me. I want you to be the most important person in my life. Jesus, show me your face that I might love you. Let me experience your presence and your power in my life. Amen

Come Holy Spirit

Jesus, I know now that I am yours and you are mine forever. I thank you for sending your Spirit to me that I might have the power to live this new life with you. Stir up your Spirit in me. Release your Spirit in me. Baptize me with the fullness of your Spirit, that I may experience your presence and power in my life. That I may find new meaning in your scriptures. That I may find new meaning in the Sacraments; that I may find delight and comfort in prayer; that I may be able to love as you love and forgive as you forgive; that I may discover and use the gifts you give me for the life of your people; that I may experience the peace and the joy that you have promised us. Fill me with your Spirit, Jesus. I wish to receive all that you have to give me. Amen.

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