

Some of us – perhaps the more technologically challenged among us - do not yet have automatic ice makers. Does that mean that we need to go through life without ice cubes, condemned to a lifetime of warm drinks? Not necessarily. What is one to do, then? Well, one can do it “the old fashioned way” – namely, one can take one’s trusty ice cube tray, fill it with water, and then stick it into the freezer. Oh, how twentieth century – but effective nonetheless! If one has done this properly - and provided that the freezer is in working order and that the electric bill has been paid - before long perfect ice cubes will have been created, and they will be just waiting for someone to release them from their plastic captivity

Now the sin of Adam and Eve was a sin of pride. We unfortunately have not learned our lesson from the unhappy experience of our first parents, for we likewise all too often succumb to the temptation of pride. Imagine that I were to take inordinate pride in my “creation”: I take one of those newly-freed ice cubes and put it on a saucer to admire it. You know what will happen: the thing will melt. It’s a good thing I put it on a saucer rather than just on the counter top: if I hadn’t, the re-liquefied water would have gotten all over everything.

What has happened? In the liquid state, water molecules are “fluid” – that is, able to move around. They take the shape of their containers - be that an ice cube tray or an ocean – and they are pushed around by forces like gravity, wind, and human activity. When we put that liquid water into a freezer, electricity causes a compressor to function, which in turn cools the freezer below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. The chilling of the water causes the molecules to line up, and bonds are created which give the frozen water a durable shape. When the ice cube is removed from the freezer and placed on a saucer, it maintains the familiar ice cube shape – at least for a while. Eventually, without a working freezer or the electrical energy required to run it, the temperature of the ice rises. The bonds which link molecules relax, allowing them once again to move about. Solid ice once again becomes liquid water. I’m very glad I had the foresight to use a saucer!

Ultimately, we are talking about “order” vs. “disorder”, “complex” vs. simple. The molecules in the ice cube are all nice and ordered, forming a complex crystalline structure; on the other hand, the same molecules in liquid water are in a relative state of disorder, simply flowing and splashing willy-nilly. If we want simple water to once again become complex, ordered ice, we need to put it back into the freezer and “turn on the juice”.

This is typical of what happens in nature as a whole: the tendency in nature is for things to fall apart, and they will continue to fall apart unless energy is added – in the case of our ice cube, electricity to run the compressor. Like every living creature, we need to keep eating to provide the energy which keeps us from falling apart. The most elaborate and well-constructed buildings fall apart unless we provide elbow grease in the form of preventative maintenance. Even our own sun will likely use up all its energy and burn itself out. (Don’t throw away the sun screen just yet: it’s not scheduled to happen today - or even tomorrow, for that matter!)

Creation and evolution go in the opposite direction. Creation takes disorder and turns it into order. Where does the energy come from? The book of Genesis tells us clearly: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void, and there was darkness over the deep, and God’s Spirit hovered over the water.” (Genesis 1:1-2) Chaos was transformed by the Spirit of God into order and

beauty, as the supernatural gave creation the impulse to go against the natural tendency to disintegrate and to develop into the wonder which we behold every day. The same impulsion continues through the six days of creation, as we see simple elements grow toward ever greater complexity, and as we then see life evolve toward humanity – the crown of creation and the only creatures capable of the knowledge of God.

Again turning to the book of Genesis, we see God reflecting on the solitary Adam and saying, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helpmate.” (Genesis 2:1) Only as two can human beings bring forth new life; the family of husband and wife and children becomes the basic building block for all human society. Again we see the Holy Spirit at work: the Spirit is the Personification of God’s love, thus this same “Life-creating Spirit” is clearly operative in the love of a man and a woman which allows human beings to participate in God’s own creative activity.

Charlie Brown is reported to have said, “I love humanity; it’s people I can’t stand.” Certainly one can understand his sentiments, for we often have as much trouble getting along with others as they have getting along with us. There are nonetheless advantages to getting beyond these difficulties; after all, we can accomplish more when we doggedly work together than when we struggle alone in peaceful isolation. Perhaps this is the lesson of the feast of Pentecost. You remember that, on the first Pentecost, people from many lands were able to understand the apostles at the same time – even though none of them spoke a common language. Imagine that: it seems that God actually wants people to understand one another! Such a concept!

Isn’t this the exact opposite of what happened at the Tower of Babel. You remember: everybody had gotten together to build a tower high enough to reach God in heaven. What presumptuous little pipsqueaks we human beings once again proved ourselves to be! Remember: the sin of Adam and Eve was a sin of pride, a sin which we keep committing again and again; the building of the Tower of Babel was just one more sorry example of sinful human pride. As you recall, God punished the people by confusing their languages: if they all spoke different languages, they couldn’t communicate with one another, which meant that all work came to a screeching halt in a cacophony of “babble”. No longer able to communicate or work with each other, the people turned their backs on one another and dispersed in mutual disgust. Pentecost, however, turned the Tower of Babel on its head, undoing the evil which was wrought there: misunderstanding was transformed into mutual comprehension, dispersed people were once again brought together, chaos was transformed into order. Such are the miracles wrought by the Spirit of God’s love on the first Pentecost; they can be our miracles as well – provided that we let ourselves be transformed. When we refuse to let ourselves be changed by the Spirit of God’s love, we once again commit that same old sorry sin of Adam and Eve: pride.

As you see, the Holy Spirit is the Divine Agent of transformation. When we are true to our vocation as Christians, we open ourselves to the Power of the Holy Spirit, letting ourselves be transfigured. The Holy Spirit comes in like the great wind of Pentecost, shaking us out of our comfortable complacency. The Holy Spirit comes with the flame of Pentecost, setting us ablaze with God’s own Love so that we might bring warmth to a world frozen by cold hearts, and so that we might bring light to a world that stumbles in the darkness of ignorance. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, we become

capable of transformation into credible icons of the Christ, the Light of the World, Who is the perfect manifestation of God's Love.

What we have just seen happening to us is typical of the action of the Holy Spirit: when the Holy Spirit overpowers the earthly, the earthly becomes capable of bringing forth the heavenly – indeed, the Divine. To understand this, let us take a look at the icon of the Mother of God referred to as “the Sign”: it shows the Mother of God with her hands raised in prayer, and in her womb we see the Child Jesus. The Virgin from Nazareth, who is an earthly creature, has been docile to the Power of the Holy Spirit, and thus has been empowered to bring forth the Divine - giving birth to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As we can see, when the Holy Spirit overshadows the earthly, the earthly becomes capable of bringing forth the heavenly.

In iconography, the Mother of God can be seen to symbolize the Church. As the human Mother of God is an earthly creature, so is the visible Church made up of earthly creatures – namely, human beings like you and me. When the Holy Spirit overshadows the Church, we too are enabled to bring forth the Divine – to make Christ's presence real and perceptible to a world which, perhaps without knowing it, is desperate for His presence.

How does the Church do this? Do you remember what was said about Pentecost and upending the Tower of Babel? Dispersion is reversed, as far-flung people are brought together in unity. Chaos is overcome as, echoing St. Augustine, our minds and hearts become one in Christ: we are called upon to overcome misunderstanding and discord, working toward understanding and co-operation; instead of working against one another for selfish purposes, we are called upon to work together for the well-being of all.

Unfortunately, this idealized picture does not often reflect reality: we are all too aware of the problems which still abound in the Church – to say nothing of the world at large! God's gift of free will allows us to make bad or sinful choices, for God respects us too much to infringe upon our freedom – even when we use it unwisely. Obviously we need to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that we might be given the wisdom which is so necessary for us in exercising our free will. In fact, we often call upon the Holy Spirit to overshadow us and the Church. This kind of prayer is so common that we give it a name: we call it an *epiclesis* [e-PICK-le-sis].

You may or may not be aware of the *epiclesis* which is prayed at every Divine Liturgy. You see, it is among the traditionally silent prayers of the *anaphora* [a-NAFF-o-rah] – that is, the great consecratory Eucharistic Prayer. Here are the words of the most frequently used Divine Liturgy – that is, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom:

... we pray, we ask, we beseech You, send forth Your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here present, and make this bread the Precious Body of Your Christ, and that which is in this cup the Precious Blood of Your Christ, changing them by your Holy Spirit, so that They might be for the communicants sobriety of soul, forgiveness of sin, fellowship of the Holy Spirit, for confidence before You, and not for judgment or condemnation.

Did you notice that this is in fact a double *epiclesis*? The Holy Spirit is called down twice: in the words of the *anaphora*, “upon us and upon these gifts here present”. We have already discussed the transformational action of the Holy Spirit upon us; the *epiclesis* describes these effects as “sobriety of soul, forgiveness of sin, fellowship of the Holy Spirit, for confidence before You, and not for judgment or condemnation”.

In the other *epiclesis*, the transformative power of the Holy Spirit is called down upon the gifts of bread and wine which we have offered. Perhaps it can be seen as “the other side of the same coin”. After all, these gifts have a great symbolic value: in a sense, they represent us. In order to make bread and wine, wheat and grapes need to be crushed; which of us has not been crushed in many ways by life? In order to make bread and wine, there is ferment; which of us has not experienced ferment, caused not by interaction with sugars or yeast, but rather by our often ungentle interactions with one another? In any event, in both cases we see the same transformation as we witnessed in the icon of the Sign: the Spirit of God’s love is called down upon the earthly, so that in turn the earthly may give birth to the heavenly, thus making God accessible to receptive humanity.

It is easy to see how this happens in the mystery of the Eucharist: the earthly gifts of bread and wine are returned to us as heavenly gifts, the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, accessible to those who receive them in faith. It is also easy to see how this transformation has been operative in the lives of the saints, who serve as credible living icons of the Christ Who is the perfect manifestation of God. It is perhaps not so easy to see this in our own lives, where we as often as not fall far short of the ideals to which we aspire.

The double *epiclesis* of the Divine Liturgy provides hope for the likes of us. There is a saying which says “We are what we eat.” With ordinary food, we assimilate the food into ourselves, making it part of our physical bodies. It is the exact opposite in the case of the Eucharistic banquet: the Body and Blood of Christ transform us, making us part of that Visible Body of Christ which is the Church. Let us pray for the wisdom to be open to this transformation. It can make all the difference – not only for us, but for all we meet.

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