

Fourth Meditation on the Holy Spirit

The Self-control

Holy Spirit, in the beginning you hovered over the waters (cf. Gen 1:2) and brought order to the chaos. You also want to bring order to the chaos caused by sin, order in our inner and outer life. So much has been confused with original sin and the sins that follow it, that even your friend Paul lamented that a different law dwells in his spirit than in his body and - worse still - that he follows the law of the flesh (cf. Rom 7:23). With him we lament: Who will deliver me from this body? (cf. Rom 7:24)

But let it not remain so!

We must regain control over ourselves and not be slaves to our passions and feelings! It was so wonderfully ordered by our Heavenly Father: The Spirit enlightened our human spirit, it put the will into force and the natural drives were at work.

But, dear Holy Spirit, now, unfortunately, they are rebelling against us and are therefore a reflection of the fallen creation, which is rebelling against God, and in addition, the fallen spirits, who are trying to disturb the ways of salvation of God, also want to confuse us.

But it should not remain that way!

Take us into the school of self-control. Teach us to regain dominance over ourselves step by step with a wise asceticism. We cannot be spared this struggle if we want to grow spiritually with You on the way.

To your friend, St. Benedict, you have particularly recommended the right measure to find a balance in monastic life: not too much and not too little. This is a wise advice which - if we observe and practice it - teaches us a sensitivity for the right way and thus also wisely trains self-control, because all too easily we lose the right measure and fall from one extreme to another.

But, beloved Spirit, we must also sometimes do violence to ourselves, when we are tempted by desire, when it presents us with all kinds of temptations and wants to beguile

our senses. Not infrequently the enemy of all men still reinforces desire and we must defend ourselves and fight for our freedom.

But it is not only the strong emotions that tempt us. We have to pay attention to the thoughts and regain dominance over them and cannot simply leave ourselves to their dynamics, also and especially when they force themselves upon us.

To have dominion over oneself means that one decides which thoughts are worth giving oneself to and which, on the other hand, we deny our attention to, because they are bad, meaningless or unproductive. The latter, as St. Benedict says, we must smash against the rock that is Christ.

Although we must do our part and collaborate with you, we could never achieve all this with our own strength.

We need Your presence, in which we can take refuge when we are besieged; Your presence, in which we find strength to resist; Your presence, in which our will finds more and more its home, and learns to exercise dominion over our impulses, insofar as this is possible for us in our earthly existence.

Therefore, again and again we invoke You: Come, Holy Spirit!

Even better than rejecting with Your strength the attack of the present moment and everything that wants to make us lose our balance, is to be in constant and intimate contact with You, so that You become our inner compass and together with You we can exercise outer and inner dominion over our desires and thoughts.

Thus, You are our Lord, and in You we become lords over ourselves, all in a holy spiritual order. *“By your light we see the light”* (Ps 36:9)!