



The Confessional Lutheran Letter



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The sermon included below for Trinity Sunday is from Rev. Robert A. Lawson, Sr. God willing, on Sunday June 21st he will be installed as pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Princeton, Minnesota. Christ Lutheran is an unaffiliated congregation applying for membership in the Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches. Reverends Karl Heck, Robert A. Lawson, Jr., and Stephen Schmidt are expected to participate in the installation. It is anticipated that Christ Lutheran will be formally accepted into the ACLC at our next general conference. May God bless Christ Lutheran Church as Christ Jesus ministers to her through pastor Lawson.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Whoever will be saved shall, above all else, hold the catholic faith. Which faith, except everyone keeps whole and undefiled, without doubt he will perish eternally. And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in three Persons and three Persons in one God, neither confusing the Persons nor dividing the Substance (Athanasian Creed).

In his 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians (4:13) St. Paul wrote, "I believed, and therefore I have spoken." Despite the afflictions that had nearly overwhelmed him, he had experienced the Lord's mercy through safe deliverance. Once again he had been confirmed in his faith. As a result, he testified of his gratitude to the Lord by confessing the central truth of his faith: We also believe, and therefore speak; "knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus" (2 Co 4:14-15).

Some churches claim that they do not have man made creeds, yet when you ask them what they believe they express all kinds of man made doctrines. In fact, when one visits a Christian bookstore, one quickly sees that it is filled with modern day, man made creeds, only now they call them "spirit filled books." The word *Creed* comes from the Latin word *credo*, the first word in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. It is translated, *I believe*.

St. Paul has demonstrated further that there is a very clear connection between saving faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and in the confession of our faith. In Romans 10 he writes: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation" (Vv. 9-10).

This morning I want to spend a few minutes on the basis of our text, talking to you about the little known and little used

Athanasian Creed.

1. Let me say, first of all, that the Athanasian Creed is a magnificent confession of faith. It says just about everything a person could possibly say about who God is as the Holy Trinity. Luther once said, “I doubt whether the New Testament church has a more important document since the Apostolic Age” (B. W. Teigen, *I Believe*, p. 15). One God in three Persons, three Persons in one God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit –three distinct persons, yet one undivided God. A trinity of persons. A unity of being. “Hear O Israel, Yahweh* our God, Yahweh is one.” Yahweh is alone, that is, unique. He is a One of a kind. ***There is no other God like Him.***

This creed is named after St. Athanasius, a staunch defender of the Christian faith in the fourth century after Christ. It was prepared to assist the Church in combating two errors that undermined Biblical teaching about Jesus. One error denied that God’s Son and the God’s Spirit are of one being or Godhead with the Father. The other error denied that Jesus Christ is true God and true man in one person. In this age of skepticism and relativism, the Athanasian Creed continues to serve the Christian Church as a standard of the truth. It declares that whoever rejects the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of Christ is without the saving faith.

...we are able to say unequivocally that the Bible teaches that God is three distinct persons but only one God.

While the holy Scriptures do not explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity in such a way that our limited reason is able to grasp it, they do give us sufficient information about this doctrine so that we are able to say unequivocally that the Bible teaches that God is three distinct persons but only one God. The Athanasian Creed holds these two apparently contradictory truths of one God in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity in tension. It warns us not to confound the Persons nor to divide the Substance. In other words, we are not to say that there are three Gods, nor are we to say that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are merely three different personalities of the same person. There is only one God, but there is at the same time three distinct persons.

*Yahweh is a more accurate rendering of “Jehovah.”

How mysterious yet wonderful our God is. It is impossible for us to plumb the depths of what God has revealed to us. We strain to put these things into our own words. We even have to invent words like “triune.” Finally, however, we simply realize how privileged we are. What a great honor it is for us to know Him and be loved by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One God in Three Persons.

Those who think that ours is just one of many man-made religions should think again. Who could possibly make up a God like the Triune God, and seriously expect anyone in their right mind to worship Him?

2. Our creeds remind us, second of all, that what we believe is catholic, that is, it is universal—always and everywhere the same. Despite the appearance to the contrary, the Christian faith does not come in varieties and flavors. There is one Lord Jesus Christ, one faith, one Baptism, one Father, one Holy Spirit, one Lord's Supper, one forgiveness of sins. There is one Christian faith. Nor is that faith merely a private opinion or interpretation.

One of the great heresies of the modern church is the notion that faith is something private and individual, something one keeps to one’s self. An oft-repeated theme of our time, is that faith is a secret affair between your God and you, carried on in your own heart. The individualist in all of us wants to insist: “No one can tell me what to believe. That’s between God and me.” That type of thinking also fits in well with the egalitarian spirit of our society.

That kind of thinking produces isolation, however. The Christian faith, on the other hand, is catholic. It is universal and not individualistic. It is, rather, community-oriented. Baptism means death to the individual. Christians live as a member of the body of Christ. The Church is a community of believers. It is the family of the baptized, the household of faith.

In confessing the Athanasian Creed, we confess what baptized believers always and everywhere have believed. We are not saying anything new when we confess our creeds. We may drive cars, fly into outer space, watch television in high definition, heat our food with microwave ovens, and listen to music on an I-pod or MC-3 player, but God remains the same. He does not change. He is still our Father who made us, the Son who Redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost who called us by the Gospel, enlightened us with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps us, along with the whole Christian Church on earth with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

Thus we sophisticated, modern people stand up and recite those dusty old creeds every Sunday morning and whenever the church gathers; and at least once a year, on the Festival of the Holy Trinity, we even confess the Athanasian Creed. In doing so, we stand with the thousands of thousands of Christians who have gone before us. Christians who believed and confessed these same words. This is the faith, God willing, that we will pass on to our children. We, obviously, are not the first believers in Jesus, and, if He delays His return, we will not be the last. There is comfort in that. We are not alone, no matter how isolated we may otherwise be, or feel. We are members of the One, holy, Christian and apostolic Church.

3. Third, and finally, it is not enough for the one who wants to be saved to believe and worship the Trinity. It is necessary to eternal salvation also to believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to believe that Christ is at once fully God and fully Man. We are to believe that the Son of God has a two-fold “generation;” that is, that He was begotten of the Father from eternity and also born of the Virgin Mary in time. Christ clearly establishes in His own words that He existed as a Person before He was born of the Virgin Mary (Jn 8:58; Jn 17:5). At the same time, the Bible makes it as clear as crystal that the Son took on human nature from the Virgin Mary in fullness of time (Jn 1:14; Rm 9:5; 1 Tm 3:16), thus becoming a complete Man with a body and soul.

Only this God-man, Jesus of Nazareth, God’s only-begotten Son, can rescue us from sin and the grave, and give us eternal life. He is the One about whom the Scriptures give witness. He is the One the Father sent into our human flesh, the One Who came down from heaven, and was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary. He is the One Who suffered and died for our salvation; Who was lifted up upon the Cross and buried in a tomb; the One Who rose bodily from the tomb on the third day, the One Who appeared to over 500 eyewitnesses at one time. He is the One Who reigns at the right hand of the Father, Who sends His Spirit to us to work faith, forgive our sins, and raise us up from the death of unbelief to life eternal. That Jesus, is the very same Jesus for you as He is for me and for all His baptized believers.

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Of course, none of that would matter, if, as Luther says in the Large Catechism, “that saving action stays hidden and no one knows about it” (3rd Art.). We came forth from the womb of our mother with a defect. We were born corrupt, full of sin, full of evil, and full of death. There is a cancer deep within us, and there is absolutely nothing we can do about it. We needed to become totally different, completely new men and women. To use more of the wonderful imagery that the Bible provides for us, we needed to become new trees, bearing good fruit; we needed to become sheep instead of goats, good soil instead of rock, believers instead of unbelievers. In other words, we needed to be reborn. We needed to be regenerated, not rehabilitated—you cannot rehabilitate the old Adam, no matter how many twelve-step programs you march him through. Flesh, Christian friends, gives birth to flesh. Only the Holy Spirit gives birth to spirit.

What we needed, as it says in the Gospel for this day, was to be born from above—born again—as our modern English speaking Bibles put it. We needed a new, spiritual, heavenly birth. In other words, we needed to be baptized; for “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:5). Baptism is not just a quaint custom. Baptism changes us, it takes us out of isolation, and puts us into the family of Christ, the household of faith. That having been done, we are no longer alone. We are, rather, one with Christ, one with each other, and one with all true believers.

Being born from above also is not something you do. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the water and Word

There are those who teach that being born again means deciding to follow Jesus. In fact, that is the prevailing teaching of our time. **The error here ought to be obvious.** One does not decide to be born. How much did you have to do with your birth into this world? Did you decide the time and the place you were conceived? Were you consulted about when it would be convenient to be born? Were you asked if you wanted to be born to your parents or perhaps to someone else? Not only are the answers to these questions no, the questions themselves are absurd. Likewise, that is how little we have to do with our second birth of water and Spirit. Being born is something that happened to you. Being born from above also is not something you do. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the water and Word, delivering Jesus’ death and life to us, bringing us into a loving relationship with the

Father, making us part of God's family.

St. Paul calls Baptism “a washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5-8). St. Peter says that Baptism saves us, just like the flood saved Noah and his family (1 Pt 3:18-22). It saves us from sin and death, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It puts God’s name on us as we are baptized in the name of the Father and of the † Son, and the Holy Spirit, so that we are now called “Christian.” To be baptized in the name of Triune God means that we are born into death of Christ and “raised with Him by the glory of the Father, that we might walk in the newness of life” (Rm 6:10).

This is the one Christian and apostolic faith, Christian friends, without which, it is impossible to be saved. May God grant this faith to each and everyone of us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit! Amen.

News Brief

Our **Constitution and Bylaws** have been ratified, as have the minor changes to our doctrinal statement.

The **ACLCL Pastoral Conference** is Scheduled for October at Wayfarer’s Chapel Lutheran Church in Fillmore, California

The **website** authorized at our last general conference is up. Check it out at:

<http://TheACLCL.org>

“God has Made Me and All Creatures”

The 1st Article of the Apostles’ Creed

Rev. Leslie Lanier

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean?

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them; that He richly and daily provides me with food and clothing, home and family, property and goods, and all that I need to support this body and life; that He protects me from

all danger, guards and keeps me from all evil; and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I am in duty bound to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”

With these words we confess two things:

- 1) That the heavens and the earth were made, and,
- 2) That God made them.

This work of creation we ascribe to the Father, the First Person of the Holy Trinity. Not that His son didn’t have a role in creating, for Scripture tells us that He did. “All things were made through Him,” John writes in John 1:3, “and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Nor is it that the Holy Spirit had no role in creating, for Scripture tells us that He did as well. In Genesis 1:2 we’re told that at creation the Spirit of God hovered over the waters, and concerning the creation of living things, Psalm 104:30 tells us, “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created.”



God the Father created, but He did so through His Spirit and through His Son. The Father gets the credit, so to speak, because He is the source of the Holy Spirit, and because He is the One who begot His Son. He is the “Fount and Source of all goodness,” deity, and creating power. Thus, to the Father goes the title of “Maker of heaven and earth.”

Scripture also tells us not only that God made all things through His Son and Spirit, but that He made them *ex nihilo*, that is, “out of nothing,” and that He made them in six days. In Hebrews 11:3 we read that the things which are seen were not made of existing, visible things, but rather that God spoke and things came into existence (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 24). The one exception is man, whom God formed from the dust of the earth, and woman, whom God made from a rib of the man. The six-day creation is affirmed not only in Genesis 1, but also in Exodus 20:11,

where we read that, “in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.”

How can this be? First of all, because God can do all things (Genesis 18:14), as is seen not only in the miracles of the Old Testament, but also in the miracles of Christ; and secondly, because God’s word says so, and He will not lie to us nor will He deceive us.

Of course, many people, including many in the churches, don’t believe this. They believe that God created out of existing matter, if He created at all, and that He created over billions of years through an evolutionary process. But it really doesn’t matter, they say. It doesn’t matter whether you believe that God created out of nothing or whether He did it six days, because it doesn’t affect the gospel. The gospel has to do with Jesus, and one’s creation or evolutionary theory, they say, has no bearing on the gospel, on Jesus, or on one’s salvation.

While the Bible, however, doesn’t say, “whoever believes in creation will be saved,” in refusing to believe God’s word on creation a principle is set up which does affect the gospel. If one refuses to accept His word on creation, why should one accept His word on the gospel, on Jesus, on God, and on salvation? Often times, as history shows, when God’s word on creation is denied, loss of the gospel follows, along with any number of other errors.

The situation of the Missouri Synod professors, pastors, and congregations that left the synod during Seminex is a good example. They refused to be bound to the six-day creation. They refused to be bound by anything not directly affecting the gospel. Now they are part of a church body (the ELCA) where God can be seen as Mother rather than Father, where Jesus can be seen as His Child rather than His Son, where Jesus is not the only way to heaven, and where those living in fornication (heterosexual or homosexual) are told that they need not repent because God accepts them as they are. In refusing to be bound by God’s word in all things, including the six-day creation, they ended up losing the gospel. For if one doesn’t confess the right God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), one has lost the gospel. If one doesn’t confess the right Christ, that He’s God’s only begotten Son, one has lost the gospel. If

If one refuses to accept His word on creation, why should one accept His word on the gospel, on Jesus, on God, and on salvation?

one believes in a way to heaven other than through Jesus, one has lost the gospel. If one lives in sin, not repenting of fornication, one has lost the gospel. And where did it all start? By refusing to believe that Scripture is true, including its words on the six-day creation.

God made the heavens, the earth, and us, and thanks be to God for that. He richly provides us with all that we need to support this body and life, and thanks be to God for that. And He has given us His word, His Son Jesus, and the gospel, and thanks be to God for that. May He grant us grace to believe His word and to confess the Father that made us, the Son that redeemed us, and the Spirit that sanctifies us until that day when we see Him face-to-face.

“God’s Answer to Our Problem”

The 2nd Article of the Apostles’ Creed

Rev. Robert A. Lawson, Jr.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

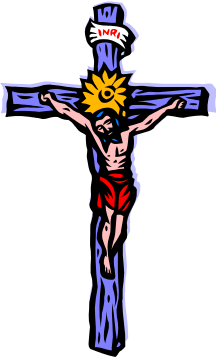
What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ is true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary; and that He is my Lord, Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me 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; in order that I might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness; even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

The two most basic phrases of the Divine Service that are repeated the most frequently throughout are these: “Lord, have mercy upon us,” and “O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world.” These phrases act as the brackets of what we call the *Ordinary of the Service*, that is, the five invariable parts of the liturgy: The Kyrie, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Creed, the Sanctus and the Agnus Dei.

Each week, as we enter into the presence of God in the Service, the very

first thing we do at the beginning of the Service is confess our problem: “Lord, have mercy upon us, Christ, have mercy upon us, Lord, have mercy upon us.” Why do we need mercy? Because we are sinners. That is our problem.



One of the Old Testament Lessons that is often read on Trinity Sunday is the vision of Isaiah from the sixth chapter of His prophecy. Isaiah was granted a glimpse of heaven where the Lord sits on His throne, high and lifted up, and where the holy seraphim fly about the throne with their eyes and feet covered, singing the thrice-holy hymn: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” (Isaiah 6:3) When Isaiah entered into the presence of the Lord, the divine presence was actually veiled. The smoke of incense filled the throne room so that Isaiah was not given to look directly into the face of the Lord, for as God said to Moses in Exodus 33:20: “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”

Nevertheless, Isaiah trembled at how close he, a sinner, had come to God’s glory. His immediate reaction was to confess his problem in fear for his life: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). This was Isaiah’s *Kyrie*: “Lord, have mercy upon us.”

So it is, as the Augsburg Confession states, for “all who are naturally born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin” (*Concordia: A Readers Edition of the Book of Concord*, p. 57). In article 1 on “Sin” the Formula of Concord elaborates on this problem of ours that keeps us shut out from God’s presence and consigns us all to death and total destruction:

Before God they [i.e., all humans born in the natural way] are thoroughly and utterly infected and corrupted by original sin, as by a spiritual leprosy. Because of this corruption and because of the fall of the first man, the human nature or person is accused or condemned by God’s Law. So we are by nature the children of wrath, death, and damnation, unless we are delivered from them by Christ’s merit.

The Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed is God’s answer to our most basic problem. That answer is clearly confessed in the last *ordinary* part of the liturgy that we sing before the distribution of the Holy Communion: “O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world.” We are indeed children of wrath, death, and damnation, *unless we are delivered from them by Christ’s merit*. Divine justice demanded the bloody death of those who had violated the Divine Perfection (“The soul who sins shall die” – Ezekiel 18:4). The Gospel, the “Good News,” is that the One Who demanded this justice is the One who met it *vicariously*, that is, *for us*, or *in our place*. St. Paul writes in his letter to the Romans: “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:8-10)

Mercy is what we need and mercy is just what God gives us in Christ. In the words of one of our great Lutheran hymns, “By Adam’s Fall Is All Forlorn”:

Now since the serpent Eve beguiled
That she so low had fallen
From God’s true Word, which she defiled,
And made us all death’s bondsmen;
Therefore the need was great indeed,
That God should mercy show us
Through His dear Son, on mercy’s throne,
And so to life restore us.
(*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #430:2)

God Himself, the very one in whose presence sinners stand under a death sentence – this same God, in the person of the Father’s Son, “assumed the human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. So there are two natures – the divine and the human – inseparably joined in one person. There is one Christ, true God and true man, Who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried. He did this to reconcile the Father to us and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of mankind” (Augsburg Confession, article 3 on the “Son of God” – *Concordia*, p. 58).

As Isaiah shook in terror, waiting for the death blow, the Lord took care of his problem and granted him life in the place of death. One of the

seraphim flew to him with a burning coal from heaven's altar in its hand. The angel touched Isaiah's lips with that coal and declared: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged" (Isaiah 6:7). Here is the declaration of divine mercy. Here is the verdict of divine acquittal. The burning coal from the heavenly altar cleansed Isaiah's lips. Indeed, the cleansing reached down deep into Isaiah's heart and completely separated him from the guilt of his sin by casting it away from God's presence.

By Adam's sin we all have sinned
 And earn but condemnation;
 So now in Christ we live again
 Through free and full salvation.
 Like as we all through Adam's fall
 Eternal death do merit,
 So now has God through Christ's dear blood
 Renewed what was corrupted.
 (Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary #430:3)

Behold how God has purged our corruption and has granted us life instead of death.

If the [Passover] lamb under Moses drove the destroyer far away, did not much rather the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, deliver us from our sins? The blood of a silly sheep gave salvation; and shall not the Blood of the Only-begotten much rather save? ... Jesus then really suffered for all men; for the Cross was no illusion, otherwise our redemption is an illusion also... These things the Savior endured, and made peace through the Blood of His Cross, for things in heaven, and things in earth. For we were enemies of God through sin, and God had appointed the sinner to die. There must needs therefore have happened one of two things; either that God, in His truth, should destroy all men, or that in His loving-kindness He should cancel the sentence. But behold the wisdom of God; He preserved both the truth of His sentence, and the exercise of His loving-kindness. Christ took our sins in His body on the tree, that we by His death might die to sin, and live unto righteousness. (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, 13th Catechetical Lecture)

"O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us." So we sing at every Communion Service. The cross is God's answer to our problem. The cross is His mercy. The cross is the heart of God *for us* and so it is the heart and center of the Apostles' Creed. The cross is the altar, and upon the cross hangs the God/Man, Christ Jesus, Who is both the priest and the sacrificial victim. By His atoning blood sin is blotted out and the gift of life is won for the whole world. Every time we hear the precious words of deliverance and receive the true Body and Blood of Christ, the burning coal of Christ's atoning sacrifice touches our lips from God's heavenly altar. All the life that is in Jesus' death and resurrection touches us and we receive the pledge of eternal life.

Why Do We Call the Spirit of God "Holy"?

The 3rd Article of the Apostles' Creed

Rev. Steven R. Brockdorf

I Believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this 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 Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; just as He calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives me and all believers all our sins; and at the last day He will raise up me and all the dead, and will grant me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

"I believe that I cannot...believe." Contemplate these words for a moment. At first glance these unqualified words seem absurd. It is a confident assertion of belief that one cannot believe; who believes such a thing? Call these words a conundrum, an oxy-moron, or just plain ridiculous; this is what we confess in the explanation to Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. Most people believe in a god or gods. The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." But we say that we believe we are incapable of believing in Jesus Christ our Lord or coming to Him.

Our belief that we cannot believe in Jesus Christ is completely Scriptural.

St. Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus, “For it is by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Our faith, our saving belief in Jesus comes from outside of ourselves. It comes from God Himself. So, it is perfectly reasonable to say, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him.”

While it is true that there are spirits that are holy, and the Spirit of God is indeed holy, that is not the reason we call Him holy. We call the Spirit of God holy, because He makes us holy. There are two very important parts to this.

We call the
Spirit of God
holy, because
He makes us
holy

First, the Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel as we read in Romans 10, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” We cannot believe on our own, but the Holy Spirit calls us, gives us faith through the Gospel. That is, He enlightens us with His gifts of preaching, absolution, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. Let us never forget that one of the gifts of the Spirit is to have ministers who preach, absolve, baptize, and consecrate so that faith in Christ might be created and maintained.

That brings us to the second part, that the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, or causes us to do that which is pleasing in God’s sight. This is done through those very same gifts by which the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

Consider that the Holy Spirit keeps us with Jesus Christ. The same Holy Spirit that moved upon the waters at creation moves upon the waters of Baptism to re-create us as brothers and sisters of Christ Jesus. The Same Holy Spirit that made Christ Jesus present in the womb of the blessed virgin, Mary, makes His body and blood present in the Holy Supper. The same Holy Spirit that created a clean heart in King David creates a clean heart in each of us through Absolution.

Through our union with Christ, the Holy Spirit gives us the greater gifts, the enduring gifts of faith, hope, and love. These are the truly miraculous gifts. While many today wish to draw attention to themselves by claiming some of the gifts poured out as a witness to the authority of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit draws attention to Christ, pouring out the greater and enduring gifts through the authoritative witness of the Apostles recorded in the Scriptures.

This, then, is the majesty of the Holy Spirit: He does not draw attention to Himself, but always to Christ (John 16:4) in whom the Father is pleased to reveal Himself (Colossians 1:15). In keeping us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith, the Holy Spirit gives us understanding of God’s word which we would not have on our own (1 Corinthians 2:14). He intercedes for us in our prayers because we do not know how to pray as we ought (Romans 8:26). He causes us to walk in the good works that God prepared for us long ago (Ephesians 2:10). And, He causes our light to shine before men that they might be drawn to the light glorify God in the day of visitation (Matthew 5:16).



Why do we call the Spirit of God “holy”? Because He washes away our sins (Titus 3:5), clothes us with Christ (Galatians 3:27), feeds us on Christ’s body and blood, and builds us up as Christ’s own body (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13). While there is so much in this world that would draw us away from Christ, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6) have the promise that the Holy Spirit, who began a good work in us, will complete it until the day that Christ returns (Philippians 1:6).

We now implore the Holy Ghost
For the true faith, which we need the most,
That in our last moments He may befriend us
And, as homeward we journey, attend us.
Lord, have mercy.

Shine in our hearts, O most precious Light,
That we Jesus Christ may know aright,
Clinging to our Savior, whose blood hath bought us.
Who again to our homeland hath brought us.
Lord, have mercy.

Thou sacred Love, grace on us bestow,
Set our hearts with heavenly fire aglow
That with hearts united we love each other,
Of one mind, in peace with every brother.
Lord, have mercy!
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