

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord teaches clearly about the facts of what we have titled “the doctrine of election”: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” And we know from the Words of our Lord that no one comes to the Father except through Him.

The Father draws men by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and the Mysteries which bestow His grace. And those He draws are those whose names are written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world.

It is a doctrine of mercy, a doctrine of grace, a doctrine of love. No man is worthy to be drawn to the Son by the Father through the Spirit. What we believe, teach, and confess is a proper exposition of the Holy Scriptures: “We cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ our Lord or come to Him.”

These words are especially appropriate this Ember Wednesday of Pentecost, words from the explanation of the Blessed Reformer Martin Luther of the Third Article of the Creed, the Article that expounds on the work of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to the Divine Call of election, the Lord speaks Words of encouragement regarding those the Father draws to Him: “They shall all be taught by God.” Of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, it is not the work of the Father to teach. The Son taught from His Incarnation to His Ascension, but the Son teaches no more. It is the work of the Holy Ghost to teach. He brings to your mind the Words of Christ. He calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies.

His calling and gathering is the drawing by the Father to the Son of which the Lord teaches. The enlightenment of the Holy Ghost is His teaching, His bringing to the mind of the faithful the Words of Christ. The Holy Ghost is the Person that brings the will and the Truth of the Father to the World. So “everyone who has heard and learned from the Father”, the Lord says, “comes to Me.”

To come to Christ is to live forever. That is the Promise of the Gospel. That promise is for you. The Holy Church is called out of a world of darkness, death and sin, and into the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of light, life, and holiness. All those who have been added to the Kingdom of Heaven will be raised up at the last day. But no one can come to the Christ unless the Father draws him. And everyone who believes in the Son has everlasting life.

The Words of Christ expose the Divine economy of salvation. Salvation is an act of the Trinity, an act of mercy, an act of love by God – the Father sending, the Son redeeming, the Spirit bringing that redemption to fallen men that they be saved.

So these Words of Christ are no philosophical exercise. They are not a foray into the unforgiving labyrinth and dusty tomes of systematic theology. Christ’s Words are living and active. They work what they describe. His Words accomplish what they promise. The Spirit works through Christ’s Words, even in your hearing of those Words this day, to grant the life and forgiveness that opens heaven to you.

There will be a day when all men who won't believe will perish in fire. But until that day, in His mercy, God provides for you in this desert, that you believe that He is the good and gracious Giver. He provides your daily bread, that which sustains your body in this life.

And by His grace He gives you better Bread, Bread which sustains for eternity. And that Bread is Christ. He is the Bread of Life. If anyone eats of Him, the Living Bread, he will live forever. For Christ gave His life that you might live.

And so does He give you to eat. By His Spirit, He fills you with Christ. Many hear His Word and reject it. But you hear His Word and by faith you are fed. For man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of Christ.

To hear and believe is to eat. To hear and believe is to be taught by the Spirit the will of the Father. To hear and believe is to receive the forgiveness Christ won by His precious death and burial, and by His glorious resurrection you are saved.

St. Augustine wrote of Christ, the Bread of Life: "Why prepare ye your teeth and your stomach? Believe, and you have already eaten." So you who believe in Jesus have the everlasting life He promises. Believing, you have eaten. And so you shall live, you shall live forever.

For the Lord who gave His Flesh for the life of the world promises "he who believes in Me has everlasting life." The doctrine of election stands. But His atonement is not limited. His own Words prove it. Christ died for all men, for the life not just of the Church, but of the world.

For you who believe, for you who have eaten unto salvation, by Sacramental Union, a Divine Mystery, the Lord places His Body and Blood with the Bread and Wine. By the work of His Spirit, you receive His Supper in faith, and so receive forgiveness and strengthening of your faith in accord with the Father's will.

So come, take, eat, the Christ who died and rose for you. Receive the Body ascended, the Blood shed for you. By this Mystery, you who the Spirit fills are filled with Christ. You are taught of God. And anyone who eats of this Bread will live forever.

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