

Discover Your Birthright

It's true that you cannot risk telling people with an immature or dualistic consciousness about the Great Indwelling before they have actually experienced it (LL1 Why we focus on Doing) , because they will always abuse it or trivialize it for purposes of superiority, libertinism, or control. This is probably what Jesus meant by one of his more offensive images, "throwing pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). At the same time, we surely did not have to deny it or keep it such a big secret! Perhaps this occurred because many of the clergy had themselves never experienced divine union and so could not teach others about it. Catholics and Orthodox make the Holy Spirit depend on membership and sacraments; Protestants make the Spirit depend on a personal decision of faith as a technique. In both cases, we are back in charge; we are the doers. There is no undergoing.

Only people who have undergone some level of conversion can be told they have the Holy Spirit and be prepared to understand what one is talking about. Life will then "fan into flame" (2 Timothy 1:6), but they will always and forever know that the fire was given from Elsewhere. There is absolutely nothing you can do to earn or get the Holy Spirit; there is nothing at all you can do to attain the divine indwelling (e.g., Romans 8:10, Galations 3:1-5). Don't try to 'believe' in the Holy Spirit as one doctrine among others. Instead, *practice drawing from this deep well within you, (LL4)* and then you will naturally believe. Put the horse first and it will draw the cart.

At the same time, there is nothing you can do to *lose* the Holy Spirit; the most you can do, as Ephesians cleverly says, is to 'grieve' the existing Presence that is 'sealed' within you (4:30). You can, therefore, be ignorant of your birthright. You can neglect the gift, and thus not enjoy its wonderful fruits. That seems to be the case with many people, and is what we mean by 'sinners'. The word signifies not moral inferiors so much as people who have no connection to their inherent dignity and importance. They have to struggle for it by all kinds of futile performances. What a waste. Thus, do not hate 'sinners' or look down on them. Feel sorry for what they are missing out on!

Why do we have this gift and yet not realize it? Perhaps God does not want to force anything on us that we do not actually ***desire or choose for ourselves***. So a lovely dance ensues between God and the soul that preserves freedom on both sides.

The gift is objectively already within you, and yet has to be *desired and awakened* by the *person*. But you never know that it is within you *until after it is awakened!* This is another paradox. Faith is often *clarified in joy-filled hindsight -- after we have experienced our experiences (e.g. Faith Sharing Index Card circle)* But the path ahead still demands walking in trust, risk, and various degrees of darkness. Henceforth, you will remember in the ***darkness*** what you once experienced in the ***light***. But the path ahead will always be a necessary ***mixture of darkness and light (LL3)***.

--- ***Richard Rohr; The Naked Now***