



EPIKLESIS

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1 Epiklesis (Latin invocatio) is the name of a prayer that occurs in all Eastern liturgies (and originally in Western liturgies also) before and after the words of Institution, in which the celebrant prays that God may send down His Holy Spirit to change this bread and wine into the Body and Blood of His Son.

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Cover: St Peter's Basilica struck by lightning.

The Epiklesis:

At every Catholic Mass a priest says a prayer over the gifts of bread and wine before him on the altar. He stretches his hands over them and at the appropriate time makes the sign of the cross over them and says:

*I: “Be pleased, O God, we pray,
to bless, acknowledge,
and approve this offering in every respect;
make it spiritual and acceptable,
so that it may become for us
the Body and ☩ Blood of your most beloved Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

He says this prayer, in hope, I believe, that God’s grace is with him following the instructions of Jesus who simply said to the apostles: “Do this in memory of me” at the last supper. Jesus instituted the Eucharist; (Thanksgiving) i.e., his body, blood, soul and divinity, in a piece of bread and a cup of wine with water. It was decided to call this repetition of Jesus’ act *transubstantiation* by the Church. “The additional Eucharistic Prayers introduced into the Roman Rite in the 1969 revision have both a pre-consecration and a post-consecration *epiklesis*.”

Pre-consecration:

II: Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray
by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall,
so that they may become for us
the Body and ☩ Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III: Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you
by the same Spirit graciously make holy
these gifts we have brought to you for consecration,
that they may become the Body and ☩ Blood
of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.

IV: Therefore, O Lord, we pray:
may this same Holy Spirit
graciously sanctify these offerings, that they may become
the Body and ☩ Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ
for the celebration of this great mystery
which he himself left us
as an eternal covenant.

Post-consecration:

I: In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God:
to command that these gifts be borne
by the hands of your holy Angel to your altar on high in the
sight of your divine majesty, so that all of us
who through this participation at the altar
receive the most holy Body and Blood of your Son
may be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing
(Through Christ Our Lord Amen)

II: Humbly we pray,
that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ
we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.

III: Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church
and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim by whose death
you willed to reconcile us to yourself,

grant that we, who are nourished
by the Body and Blood of your Son
and filled with his Holy Spirit,
may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

IV: Look, O Lord, upon the Sacrifice
which you yourself have provided for your Church,
and grant in your loving kindness
to all who partake of this one Bread and one Chalice
that, gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit,
they may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ
to the praise of your glory.

How can “sinful” men like the rest of us assume the
miraculous power to call upon GOD himself, in the Spirit,
through the words and actions of Jesus, witnessed by the
Apostles in the “upper room” the day before he was to be
crucified? This issue we shall return to later in this essay. The
following is from Eucharistic Prayer #1 following the epiklesis:

I: “On the day before he was to suffer he took bread in his holy
and venerable hands and with eyes raised to heaven to you O
God, his almighty Father, giving you thanks he said the
blessing, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples saying:

*‘Take this, all of you, and eat of it: for
this is my body which will be given up for you.’*

In a similar way, when supper was ended, he took this precious
chalice into his holy and venerable hands, and once more
giving you thanks he said the blessing and gave the chalice to
his disciples saying:

*‘Take this, all of you, and drink from it:
for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and
eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for
many for the forgiveness of sins. **Do this in memory of me.**’”*

For believers the Holy Eucharist is the continuation of Christ's life on earth. The Holy Spirit was sent so that human beings would understand in faith, by the grace of God, that they are able to live in Christ and Christ in them, participation in the life of God. With his grace they are sanctified, (made holy), enabled to live in the unseen presence of God the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit for as long as they can fervently maintain that grace. Even vaguely comprehending this calls for living in the words of the gospel as part of ones consciousness.

It shouldn't be surprising to anyone that human-nature tends to be more "nature" than human. What is natural is obviously what is intrinsically good in itself, what is super-natural, or a level above the natural such as the power of reason and the freedom of the will in man is even better. Man also has the capability of committing acts that are un-natural, a step below the natural, because of his absolute freedom of choice, and his penchant to self satisfaction from animal nature. We see it on the television screen almost every day. Among all the creatures on this particular planet, the human race has shown itself far superior in many respects from all the others. However, humans are very much aware of the struggle of not always being willing to live-up to their own supernatural potential. Since the first human thought crossed the first human mind and the use of reason matured, man has always sought the ideal, the absolute, the true. This unique characteristic of trying to find ultimate answers to every question has driven humanity to this point in time. The confusion that is sensed of ultimate perfection being always out of reach arises from the continuous "coincidence of opposites" in which we live. Where good is, there is also evil, where there's health there is sickness, where there is joy there is gloom, where there is love there is hate,

where life is, there also is death, and so on. This concurrence has always been known to great minds as well as to every man— that perfection is not of this world. Some seek it in materiality others in spirituality, many in both; but what they seek in reality, in our opinion is their origin in the Creator. Since the Incarnation of Jesus Christ that option has been made readily available to all mankind.

The tree of “life” is the same as the tree of good and evil in the center of this garden we call home. That’s how it’s been from the very beginning, at least our beginning where matter won-out over anti-matter as the universe was being formed. The inevitable question became— who wrote the laws of nature and why should matter have survived at all? How easy is it to say it all just happened by chance?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

“The holy Eucharist completes Christian initiation. Those who have been raised to the dignity of the royal priesthood by Baptism and configured more deeply to Christ by Confirmation participate with the whole community in the Lord’s own sacrifice by means of the Eucharist. ‘At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a Paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.’ The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’ ‘The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. *For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole*

spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.’”(Easter, the Resurrection)

“When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. (Isaiah 61) He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: *‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’*

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them,

‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’ All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’ He said to them, *‘Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, “Doctor, cure yourself!” And you will say, “Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’* And he said, *‘Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s home town. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.’* When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that

they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way” (Luke 4: 16-30)

2.0 km SSW of the modern city of Nazareth in Israel, highway 60 passes right by the cliff upon which the First Century town of Nazareth was perched. From that site, one gets a spectacular view of the Jezreel Valley and Mount Tabor, where Christ’s Transfiguration is said to have taken place; where Jesus appeared between Moses and Elijah in the presence of Peter, James and John. Following the incident in Nazareth Jesus walked south and spent some time in Capernaum where he performed many cures and exorcisms. The people there bid him to stay with them longer but he said:

“I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.” Then, through his Church— to the whole world.

Jesus’ reading of Isaiah’s prophesy in the synagogue of Nazareth announced to the world that a new covenant was extending from the old. It was John the Baptist who said: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” The reason for the Incarnation was made clear, the Messiah, the Redeemer had come through his people to serve all people. I don’t think anyone can explain the meaning of the “Kingdom of God” any better than St. John Paul II did in his letter *Redemptoris Missio: Redemptive Mission* (7 December 1990). We will cherry pick some of its contents and try to relate them to the Epiklesis of the mass towards the closing pages of this essay, St. John Paul II writes:

“It is ‘God, who is rich in mercy’ whom Jesus Christ has revealed to us as [Our] Father: it is his very Son who, in

himself, has manifested him and made him known to us.” I wrote this at the beginning of my Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia: Rich in Mercy*, to show that Christ is the revelation and incarnation of the Father's mercy. Salvation consists in believing and accepting the mystery of the Father and of his love, made manifest and freely given in Jesus through the Spirit. In this way the kingdom of God comes to be fulfilled: the kingdom prepared for in the Old Testament, brought about by Christ and in Christ, and proclaimed to all peoples by the Church, which works and prays for its perfect and definitive realization.”

“Jesus of Nazareth brings God's plan to fulfillment. After receiving the Holy Spirit at his Baptism, Jesus makes clear his messianic calling: he goes about Galilee “preaching the Gospel of God and saying: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel’” The proclamation and establishment of God's kingdom are the purpose of his mission: ‘I was sent for this purpose.’ But that is not all. Jesus himself is the ‘Good News,’ as he declares at the very beginning of his mission in the synagogue at Nazareth, when he applies to himself the words of Isaiah about the Anointed One sent by the Spirit of the Lord. Since the ‘Good News’ is Christ, there is an identity between the message and the messenger, between saying, doing and being. His power, the secret of the effectiveness of his actions, lies in his total identification with the message he announces; he proclaims the ‘Good News’ not just by what he says or does, but by what he is.”

”Jesus’ encounters with Gentiles make it clear that entry into the kingdom comes through faith and conversion, and not merely by reason of ethnic background.”

“St. John’s gospel tells us that ‘God is love’. Every person therefore is invited to ‘repent’ and to ‘believe’ in God’s merciful love. The kingdom will grow insofar as every person learns to turn to God in the intimacy of prayer as to a Father and strives to do his will.”

“Jesus gradually reveals the characteristics and demands of the kingdom through his words, his actions and his own person.”

“The kingdom of God is meant for all mankind, and all people are called to become members of it. To emphasize this fact, Jesus drew especially near to those on the margins of society, and showed them special favor in announcing the Good News.”

“The liberation and salvation brought by the kingdom of God come to the human person both in his physical and spiritual dimensions. Two gestures are characteristic of Jesus’ mission: healing and forgiving.”

“The kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another. Jesus sums up the whole Law, focusing it on the commandment of love. Before leaving his disciples, he gives them a ‘new commandment’: *‘Love one another; even as I have loved you’*. Jesus’ love for the world finds its highest expression in the gift of his life for mankind, which manifests the love which the Father has for the world. The kingdom’s nature, therefore, is one of communion among all human beings—with one another and with God.

“The kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society, and the world. Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God’s activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. In a word, the kingdom

of God is the manifestation and the realization of God's plan of salvation in all its fullness.”

“At the climax of Jesus' messianic mission, the Holy Spirit becomes present in the Paschal Mystery in all of his divine subjectivity: as the one who is now to continue the salvific work rooted in the sacrifice of the cross. Of course Jesus entrusts this work to human beings: to the apostles, to the Church. Nevertheless, in and through them the Holy Spirit remains the transcendent and principal agent for the accomplishment of this work in the human spirit and in the history of the world.”

“The Holy Spirit is indeed the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission. His action is preeminent in the mission ad gentes, (to the people) as can clearly be seen in the early Church: in the conversion of Cornelius, in the decisions made about emerging problems and in the choice of regions and peoples to be evangelized. The Spirit worked through the apostles, but at the same time he was also at work in those who heard them: ‘Through his action the Good News takes shape in human minds and hearts and extends through history. In all of this it is the Holy Spirit who gives life.’”

It is not peculiar that within man (in a generic sense) there is the choice between good and evil existing as human-nature side by side. By nature man carries much of the characteristics of his non human forebears such as his natural instincts, his physical and societal needs, his emotional makeup etc. By the time we quit swinging from trees and started walking upright on the savannah heading after game and becoming game ourselves, much had physically and mentally changed. The brain to mind transformation had taken place as human-nature emerged from nature. Reason and will evolved as a mental

coefficient of brain states along with our physical attributes and became *mind*. All seems well planned along the timeline for Homo Sapiens' phylogeny. However our neurobiological pathways developed, we were able to think abstractly and therefore creatively— enabling us to reverse decisions and choose to do, within reason, things that we considered best for us and our progeny. We knew the difference between good and bad. What was good for us— we embraced, what was bad— we avoided. We were on the way to controlling our environment in ways that supported the good just as what was good supported us. It was the “intrinsic good” that held it all together. In our opinion we saw this good as a higher power than ourselves.

Now we can return to the Epiklesis or the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the ritual of the Roman Catholic mass. If you happen to be a secular humanist and you believe your powers of reasoning and free-will are strictly physical properties of the body and mind, generally brought about by electro-chemical neuronal activity through the senses, there should be no interest at all in this subject. When “spirit” is nothing other than enterprise or enthusiasm and not the vital principle of life in a human being, it is fair to say that the concept of God, spiritual beings or the spiritual powers made available to some men and women make no sense whatsoever. Were it not for the fact that three quarters of the world's population believe in spirituality, the atheist could honestly say that three quarters of the world has gone mad or has been deluded. Judging from many of the barbarous religious practices and observances that some of the world's religions have displayed over the centuries, he or she can be secure in their convictions. Yet, every serious student of history knows that religious institutions have done more good than harm for billions of people over the centuries with the exception of a very few— due primarily to population expansion and politics.

If God were *not* what we may call the “good-of-existence,” no one would see the need to follow the good. God, the Father, is that which makes things whole in the human family, the One in whom we can sense the inevitable rightness of things amid the contradictions of life. Confidence in a greater good can wane due to weaknesses of choice; that’s where we may find ill-will. The will is always totally free; if it chooses evil, it is still free as good is rejected, or free if evil is rejected. The will, though, can be subjected to habit by reason. Reason is notoriously fickle, we can be convinced by faulty reasoning to commit the will to choose evil having reasoned it to be good. We also can resist the good by reasoning the good to be bad for us. Everything seems to be a matter of good-will or ill-will; still, the ultimate choice is always our own. Yes, we are indeed the captain of our ship, but it must be said that without truly understanding the Intrinsic Good, or God, conscience can become either erroneous or flawless by habitual rationalization. The handbook for such understanding is the Mosaic Law and the gospels for most people. Both are empirical revelations of the Intrinsic Good appealing to the functional evolution of the human mind.

The introduction of “the kingdom of God” to humanity by Jesus is that miraculous moment in world history, at the fullness of time, where the Intrinsic Good, God the Father, is not only revealed in practical terms by parables but demonstrated in real-time by the “Son of Man” with merciful, spiritual deeds and gestures witnessed and recorded by his followers. “The kingdom of God” then, is the most efficient way of explaining the Intrinsic Good in every individual and every individual in the Intrinsic Good through the redemptive acts of Christ as Savior, with the Spirit of Life as Love. Jesus said:

“No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Up to that time in history God was known mythologically, then prophetically through the Jews. After that time with Jesus’ resurrection, what was formerly believed of God in abstentia was now factually demonstrated in Jerusalem and Galilee by the Christ. Death was defeated and eternity was offered to those who would follow the commandments of love as the Kingdom of God became a reality. Jesus instructed his followers to do precisely what he had done and then withdrew from their midst. Forty days later their own journey began with hope in their hearts of spreading the “Good News” and baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; all of whom they now knew by the grace of the one God in practical terms as faith. All but one would be martyred for that faith. Clarity had finally come to spirituality and so it remains today.

It is very important to note that all through human history rituals involving life and death were enacted everyplace in the world. Man created sacred places, sacred spaces, sacred intonations and acts of initiation and idols of all kinds, for the purpose of showing reverence to a power which he imagined and believed to be greater than himself. Worship was very much a part of the life of our early ancestors as language developed. Animals didn’t worship, worship began after the brain to mind transition of the nascent human race. It concerns us when todays neurobiologists and psychologists blame our ancestors for living an illusion rather than what we should be calling human-nature. One particular professor has a little different take on worship.

“Professor Todd Murphy proposes that reincarnation is an evolutionary adaptation that contributed to the survival of our species, and that the self is an hallucination, that God is a

manifestation of our own sense of self, that enlightenment appears after an avalanche of neural activity in very specific brain areas. He also believes that spirituality is a very positive force in the world, and in the lives of individual people. Spirituality, he argues, is an adaptive force that's crucial to our survival as a species, and so is an integral part of our nature. An atheist who openly encourages prayer, Murphy goes well past the debates between skeptics and believers to see how religion helps us, without regard for the truth or falsehood of anyone's private beliefs.” (Professor Todd Murphy has been a member of Laurentian University's Behavioral Neuroscience program under the direction of Dr. Michael A. Persinger since 1998.)

It sounds to us like Murphy likes to have his cake and eat it too. Sure, you can be a spiritualist, it's probably good for your mental health, but remember it's all just part of the hallucination which is your self. Just forget the truth or falsehood of your belief. We are reminded of Staples advertising: “That was easy!” Setting aside truth or falsehood eliminates debate about everything— no matter, you're only a hallucination anyway. In our opinion Murphy's truth in this case is quite false.

Most people have a great regard for the truth, there was a time when people swore by it. How can one swear by an abstraction or an actuality or “actual-existence”? Well, if in ones mind there is an understanding that actuality or reality ultimately exists beyond which there is nothing *more* true, we can claim to swear by the ultimate truth which is essentially God. For example, in a somewhat similar way there is an answer to every mathematical equation regardless of the fact that a specific problem has not been posed. If one were to be posed, we are secure in the belief that there would be a correct mathematical answer. This is one of sciences' most valuable dogmas. It's

what keeps them looking for the theory of everything; “the mind of God.” Of course this is exempting the “non-linear” mathematics of current day physics.

“The epiclesis maintains the trinitarian character of the eucharistic prayer, which is addressed to the Father, commemorates the saving action of the Son, and invokes the power of the Spirit.” Now while many Secular Materialists will contest the practice of literally calling upon a “non-existent” Spirit, they have no compunction with regard to arriving at the “theory of everything” after which they can computerize themselves and live for all eternity on a heavenly island in the Bahamas dieting on preserved citrons, pistachio-nuts, and Bellini’s.

“In the 14th century the epiclesis became an issue in the polemics between Greeks and Latins, because all Eastern eucharistic prayers included an invocation of the Holy Spirit while the Roman canon of the mass did not. Most modern scholars agree that there had been an epiclesis, in the original Eucharist of the early church of Rome, in addition to the other Latin eucharistic prayers. Medieval Latin theology, however, allowed for the disappearance of the epiclesis since it was believed that the consecration of bread and wine and their transubstantiation into the body and blood of Christ took place when the priest pronounced the words of institution. The question of the epiclesis was debated at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–45), but no formal definition was made. The medieval Latin view was then endorsed by the Council of Trent (1545–63), but the liturgical reforms adopted in Roman Catholicism after the second Vatican Council (1962–65) have included the introduction of an epiclesis in the canon of the mass. This epiclesis, however, is placed before the words

of institution so that the consecratory function of the latter can still be maintained.”

In his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei*, Pope Paul VI, no. 46 (see note 139,) wrote:

To avoid any misunderstanding of this type of presence, which goes beyond the laws of nature and constitutes the greatest miracle of its kind, we have to listen with docility to the voice of the teaching and praying Church. Her voice, which constantly echoes the voice of Christ, assures us that the way in which Christ becomes present in this Sacrament is through the conversion of the whole substance of the bread into His body and of the whole substance of the wine into His blood, a unique and truly wonderful conversion that the Catholic Church fittingly and properly calls transubstantiation. As a result of transubstantiation, the species of bread and wine undoubtedly take on a new signification and a new finality, for they are no longer ordinary bread and wine but instead a sign of something sacred and a sign of spiritual food; but they take on this new signification, this new finality, precisely because they contain a new "reality" which we can rightly call ontological. For what now lies beneath the aforementioned species is not what was there before, but something completely different; and not just in the estimation of Church belief but in reality, since once the substance or nature of the bread and wine has been changed into the body and blood of Christ, nothing remains of the bread and the wine except for the species—beneath which Christ is present whole and entire in His physical "reality," corporeally present, *although not in the manner in which bodies are in a place.*

Christianity derived the ceremony of ordination from the Jewish custom of ordaining rabbis by the laying on of hands (the Semikha) in the Hebrew Scriptures. In Christian churches, a rite for the dedication and commissioning of ministers. The essential ceremony consists of the laying of hands of the ordaining minister upon the head of the one being ordained, with prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of grace required for the carrying out of the ministry. The service also usually includes a public examination of the candidate and a sermon or charge concerning the responsibilities of the ministry. The commission given to a whole line of popes as ecclesiastical providers or bishops, originated from Jesus Christ himself after his resurrection. It's probably a good idea to include John's gospel as a point of reference:

John 21

“After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples.”

“Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We will go with you.’ They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.”

“Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, ‘Children, you have no fish, have you?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ He said to them, ‘Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ When Simon Peter

heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the lake. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.”

“When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.’ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.”

“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ A second time he said to him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon son of John, do you love me?’ Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.’ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’”

“Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, ‘Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?’ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, what about him?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!’ So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, ‘If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?’”

“This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

“Irenaeus of Lyons wrote in the 2nd century that Peter and Paul had been the founders of the Church in Rome and had appointed Linus as succeeding bishop. Clement of Alexandria states that "Peter had preached the Word publicly at Rome. (A.D. 190)"(Wikipedia)

“Lactantius, in his book called *Of the Manner in Which the Persecutors Died*, written around 318, noted that ‘And while Nero reigned, the Apostle Peter came to Rome, and, through the power of God committed unto him, wrought certain miracles, and, by turning many to the true religion, built up a faithful and stedfast temple unto the Lord.’”(Wikipedia)

“The Catholic Church speaks of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, as the successor of Saint Peter. This is often interpreted to imply that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome. However, it is also said that the institution of the papacy is not dependent on

the idea that Peter was Bishop of Rome or even on his ever having been in Rome. While accepting that Peter came to Rome and was martyred there, scholars find no historical evidence that he held episcopal office there.”(Wikipedia) Still, Peter’s preeminence is unmistakable with reference to John 21.

“While the church in Rome was already flourishing when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans about AD 57, he greets some fifty people in Rome by name, but not Peter whom he knew. There is also no mention of Peter in Rome later during Paul's two-year stay there in Acts 28, about AD 60-62. Church historians consistently consider Peter and Paul to have been martyred under the reign of Nero, around AD 65 after the Great Fire of Rome. Presently, most Catholic and Protestant scholars, and many scholars in general, hold the view that Peter was martyred in Rome under Nero.”(Wikipedia)

Does that mean that in the line of popes from Linus on, were all exemplary individuals as Peter? No; but traditionally the unique spiritual commission with which Peter was charged, elaborated in John’s gospel, ought not be refuted if you’re a believer in the gospel. We think it’s fair to say that that commission given in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was passed on after Peter’s martyrdom, despite a few of the bad apples in the barrel since then. The Spirit in the Church does not take a vacation because some of her officials were sinners. Justice is welded to Mercy, and the sacrament of reconciliation instituted for all of us by Christ, has been alive and well in those who have given their lives to Jesus Christ and remain obedient to his teaching in the service of love. *“If you want to be perfect go and sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.”* (Matt, 19: 21).

We need to be reminded here, that nothing of great value in the Vatican or any bishop's residence for that matter, belongs to any particular individual bishop. We think the current Bishop of Rome has shown ample examples of that. Unfortunately it has not always been thus. We are dealing with human beings who can indeed be of ill will. Those who have sinned against the Spirit may have condemned themselves.

Now we can ask the interminable question again: How can "sinful" men like the rest of us assume the miraculous power to call upon GOD himself, in the Spirit, through the words and actions of Jesus, witnessed by the Apostles in the "upper room" the day before he was to be crucified? The answer can be simply stated. No spiritual power has any direct relationship with their neurobiological or human condition. Although, initially, it is through the Spirit, we all have life. The grace of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and their unique commission by their ordination to the priesthood is an addition to their lives, a further spiritual component, a continuous thread from Jesus in the upper-room on the evening before he was betrayed, as well as from that morning on the beach where they met once again after he had risen, where Peter was specifically given a commission.

All the people of God, have gotten to believe what they believe by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. The special calling of God's workers in the vineyard, his priesthood, is a miracle in itself. Still, every minister is always reminded: "*Many are called, but few are chosen,*" or, "So the last shall be first, and the first last." Something for all of us to reason about.

Grace is the spirit of man living in the Spirit of God, as they say: "participation in the life of God." Love is a joining, a

communion, a joyful being “with and in” the other, not figuratively but actually in spirit, and if in spirit, in the reality of the truly joined life of God and man. This was brought to human understanding by the two natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God with us as his brothers and sisters in the love of the Father *in* the Spirit. This Sanctifying grace is obtained by the communion of the Father through the Son in the Spirit and in us. In all humility we exist only in his everlasting Love even if we’re free to reject it.

“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one.”

Alleluia, alleluia.

“My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord;

I know them, and they follow me.”

Alleluia, alleluia.