

a sermon from TITUS 3:4-7

THE DIVINE LOVE PURSUES US!

Robert Baral
8/31/2007 AD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. A PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI
- II. A PROPOSITION
- III. A SCRIPTURE VERSE – TITUS 3:3-7 – THE LOVE OF GOD PURSUES US
- IV. INTRODUCTION - WHAT IS THIS DIVINE LOVE THAT PURSUES US?
- V. HE LOVED US EVEN WHEN WE WERE LOST IN SIN
- VI. HE CAME AS OUR SAVIOUR BECAUSE OF HIS KINDNESS AND LOVE
- VII. NOT BECAUSE OF OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT BECAUSE OF HIS MERCY
- VIII. WE ARE BORN AGAIN IN HIS SPIRIT UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS
- IX. GREAT IS HIS GRACE TO US IN THE MESSIAH JESUS
- X. BY HIS GRACE WE ARE BORN AGAIN IN HIM BOTH NOW AND FOREVER
- XI. THE DIVINE LOVE IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST
- XII. IN CONCLUSION
- XIII. REFERENCES

I. A PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

“O Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace!

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is discord, harmony;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light, and

Where there is sorrow, joy.

Oh Divine Master, grant that I may not
so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand; to be loved
as to love; for it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.”¹

In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. Amen.

II. A PROPOSITION

The Divine Love of The LORD towards us is the highest order of love, in that – while we were yet sinners dead in our sin and in enmity towards GOD – The Creator Himself came Incarnate to suffer and die on The Cross to redeem us from sin and death back to Himself, though we by no means merited His sacrifice for us, but by His Grace we are raised again by His Spirit into new life with Him, both now and forever!

III. A SCRIPTURE VERSE – TITUS 3:3-7 – THE LOVE OF GOD PURSUES US

3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

4 But after that the kindness and love of GOD our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His Mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of The HOLY... [SPIRIT];

6 Which He shed on us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour;

7 That being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.²

¹ 1, “Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi.” Saint Francis.
<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pray0027.htm>

² 2, KJV, TITUS 3:3-7.

IV. INTRODUCTION - WHAT IS THIS DIVINE LOVE THAT PURSUES US?

What is love? How does it relate to The Almighty's affection for us? And how do we know His Perfect Divine Love? The answers to these questions rest, not in how this fallen world defines love, but how GOD Himself defines love. The clearest example of the highest order of love is The Divine Love Incarnate, JESUS CHRIST, Who – while we were yet sinners – suffered and died upon The Cross, that we may be raised with Him into new life both now and forever!

We see reflections of True Love in the prayer of Saint Francis, a love which is others-focused and others-giving. By giving of itself to others above self, it seeks to ease the strife, anger, injury, discord, doubt, despair, darkness and sorrow in others. It makes itself the servant of The Most High, desiring to become His instrument in ministering to others above the self. Its fruits towards others above the self are peace, love, pardon, harmony, faith, hope, light and joy.

True Love seeks, not so much as to be consoled and comforted, but rather to console and comfort others. It seeks not so much to be the center of its own life, but in love to place the needs and welfare of others at its center of being. Knowing how much GOD loves us, and how precious is The Body and Blood by Which we are pardoned of our sins, it seeks to pardon others, even when others do not offer the same.

True Love offers up itself to GOD for the sake of others, that it might be born again in The Likeness of The Saviour JESUS CHRIST, Who Himself gave Himself up to redeem us back to Himself. And so it is to The Cross that we shall seek the answer to our question, "What is love?" There, at the blessed Cross of our Redeemer, we shall find that The Divine Love pursues us!

V. HE LOVED US EVEN WHEN WE WERE LOST IN SIN

TITUS 3:3, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."³

³ 2, KJV, TITUS 3:3.

As the Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes here, Saint “Paul never lost his memory of what he once was, and it moved him to compassion for the lost.”⁴ For before Paul was CHRIST’s great Christian Evangelist and Apostle, he was Saul the bloody oppressor of the saints and cold-hearted Pharisee, of whom The Lord declared in MATTHEW 23:27, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness!”⁵

What we observe here is that, while we were yet lost in sin, consigned to be at enmity towards The Creator in both this life and in eternity because of our iniquity, His Divine Love pursued us. As Saint Paul confesses in ROMANS 5:8, “But GOD commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us!”⁶ Indeed, while we were yet lost in foolishness, disobedience, deception, lusts, twisted pleasures, anger, envy, hate and cruelty, GOD loved us from before the beginning of time and creation.

Saint Augustine, in his many years of searching for peace in his youth, ran as did Jonah into the very depths of the cold seas of the world, the flesh and the devil. But The Light of CHRIST shed That marvelous Grace into his very being, blinding his darkness with the zenith brightness of Divine Love. So Augustine writes in his “Confessions” of his coming face to face with The Love of GOD, “Urged to reflect upon myself, I entered under Your guidance into the inmost depth of my soul. I was able to do so because ‘You [O LORD] were my helper.’”⁷

The soul that learns that none of the passing things of the world can give fulfillment or peace is often more able to hear The Word of GOD more clearly. As the psalmist cries out in PSALM 30:2,10, “O LORD my GOD, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me. Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be Thou my helper!”

⁴ 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, TITUS 3:3, p 1395.

⁵ 2, KJV, MATTHEW 23:27.

⁶ 2, KJV, ROMANS 5:8.

⁷ 4, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, p 1355, paragraph 1. “From the Confessions of Saint Augustine, bishop. O Eternal Truth, True Love and Beloved Eternity.”

⁸ And when Saint Augustine cried out on his knees to The Lord, as with David, he found The Love of GOD, having been there all the time, pursuing him.

As the psalmist observes in PSALMS 30:5, when we turn to The Almighty Who alone saves us in the midst of our dark valleys of life, we find that - by His loving hand - our "...weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!"⁹ Saint Padre Pio echoes These Divine Words of Love, saying, "Do not let your heart be troubled in the hour of trial, because JESUS has promised His real assistance to those who follow Him. In times of struggle, remember JESUS; turn to Him and you will always be victorious... [according to His will]. Therefore, live tranquilly, and don't be bewildered in the dark night through which your spirit is passing..."¹⁰ Wait upon The Lord, and His arm shall uphold and deliver His saints!

So with David and Augustine, we also may thus cry out in thanksgiving and joy to Him, as in PSALM 30:11-12, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; To the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O LORD my GOD, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever!"¹¹

VI. HE CAME AS OUR SAVIOUR BECAUSE OF HIS KINDNESS AND LOVE
TITUS 3:4, "But after that the kindness and love of GOD our Saviour toward man appeared,"¹²

As Matthew Henry says here so well of the love and kindness of GOD towards us, most especially at The blessed Cross of our Saviour, "...By Grace we are saved from First to last. This is the ground and motive [of] GOD's pity and mercy to man... [For] GOD is not, cannot be, moved by any thing out of Himself [as if He were to need

⁸ 2, KJV, PSALM 30:2,10.

⁹ 2, KJV, PSALM 30:5.

¹⁰ 5, The PSALMS with Saint Padre Pio, PSALM 30:5, p 46, paragraph 2-3. "Just Wait."

¹¹ 2, KJV, PSALM 30:11-12.

¹² 2, KJV, TITUS 3:4.

anything for His completion]. The occasion [of His hand to save rather] is in man, namely, his misery and wretchedness.”¹³

Matthew Henry continues, “Sin bringing that misery, [Divine] wrath might have issued out rather than compassion; but GOD, knowing how to adjust all with His own honour and perfections, would pity and save rather than destroy. He delights in mercy. Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound... [in CHRIST for us]. Let us acknowledge this, and give Him the glory of it, not turning it to wantonness, but to thankfulness and obedience.”¹⁴

Saint Augustine continues in recounting how The Lord delivered him from darkness into His peace, how the kindness and love of GOD our Saviour shone His Presence into his suffering soul. So he writes further, “In entering into myself I saw, as it were with the eye of the soul, what was beyond the eye of the soul, beyond my spirit: Your immutable light. It was not the ordinary light perceptible to all flesh...” but JESUS CHRIST Himself.¹⁵ The kindness and love of GOD we see all around us in the miracles and blessings of creation in this life, but most especially we see these Divine attributes in the Incarnation, ministry, Passion and Crucifixion of The Saviour for us!

GOD came Incarnate in The Person JESUS CHRIST - fully GOD and fully Man but without sin – Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. He lived and was tempted as are we, but did not and could not sin. For us He worked out the cause of salvation of our souls and the coming of The Kingdom, His Body The Church, on The Cross. And so must we, as we learn to follow our Saviour and take up the crosses He places before us every day. CHRIST asks nothing of us that He Himself did not suffer for us, and so He says to the rich young man who sought The Kingdom of GOD and kept The Commandments in MARK 10:21, “...One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever

¹³ 6, Matthew Henry Commentaries, TITUS 3:1-8, “...The Import and Origin of Salvation; Regeneration; Justification,” II, 2,(2).

¹⁴ 6, Matthew Henry Commentaries, TITUS 3:1-8, “...The Import and Origin of Salvation; Regeneration; Justification,” II, 2,(2).

¹⁵ 4, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, p 1355-1356, paragraph 1. “From the Confessions of Saint Augustine, bishop. O Eternal Truth, True Love and Beloved Eternity.”

thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come, take up... [thy] cross, and follow Me!”¹⁶

Father Walter Cizek was a Catholic Priest arrested simply for being a clergyman when Stalin’s armies invaded western Poland in 1939. He writes of his path of service in CHRIST, of his arrest and imprisonment in the former communist Soviet Union’s frightful and dark torture prisons and Siberian gulag work camps about twenty years – and of his time after his release – ministering to his fellow abused fellow prisoners and then to persecuted Russian Christians in his book, “He Leadeth Me.”¹⁷ He observes, “Truly, man is a creature composed of body and soul, and we work out our salvation in this vale of tears through the medium of the flesh.”¹⁸

There Father Cizek learned to follow The Divine Love Incarnate, JESUS CHRIST, Who pursued him and upheld him daily, walking with him, preceding him with His Presence, dwelling within him, working through him and when necessary pursuing him. As he learned to submit his own will to The Divine Will of The Creator, submitting to and trusting in The Providence of The Almighty, he observes, “For each of us, salvation means no more and no less than taking up daily The same Cross of CHRIST, accepting each day what it brings as The Will of GOD, offering back to GOD each morning all the joys, works and sufferings of that day.”¹⁹

Saint Peter writes in I PETER 2:9-10 to the redeemed saints of The Lord, and how the kindness and love of GOD in The Messiah JESUS brings us into His Kingdom, though they – like us – were lost in darkness and sin: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of GOD: which had not obtained mercy,

¹⁶ 2, KJV, MARK 10:21.

¹⁷ 7, Father Walter Cizek, “He Leadeth Me,” p 11-15, “Prologue.”

¹⁸ 7, Father Walter Cizek, “He Leadeth Me,” p 96, paragraph 1. “Chapter 9. The Body.”

¹⁹ 7, Father Walter Cizek, “He Leadeth Me,” p 96, paragraph 1. “Chapter 9. The Body.”

but now have obtained mercy” in CHRIST JESUS! ²⁰

VII. NOT BECAUSE OF OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT BECAUSE OF HIS MERCY
TITUS 3:5, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...” ²¹

We do not save ourselves, but only by The Almighty’s Grace are our sins wiped away by His loving and merciful hand! As The Jerome Bible Commentary says here, “We Christians... are enabled to live virtuously in the present and with hope for the future by the saving power of GOD in CHRIST.” ²² We are in His hands in all things, most especially as we stand before His Judgement Seat daily as we seek His Grace. For we also “...were once like those nonbelievers [under GOD’s judgement for sin] but were gratuitously rescued by GOD’s power!” ²³

How so? Only by “CHRIST as GOD’s Instrument... [of] kindness and love,” most undeserving as we are, towards us. Therefore our good works before The Cross are “...the special task of believers; but they are a response to GOD’s prior saving work” towards and in us; they are the fruit in the soul redeemed in The Messiah JESUS, The Lord being The First Cause of our salvation by His Grace. ²⁴

Saint Augustine beholds the great mercy of The Almighty Which pursued him and shone into his soul. He writes further, “O Eternal Truth, True Love and Beloved Eternity, You are my GOD. To you do I sigh day and night. [For] When I first came to know You, You drew me to Yourself... You overcame the weakness of my vision, sending forth more strongly the beams of Your light, and I trembled at once with love and dread!” ²⁵

²⁰ 2, KJV, I PETER 2:9-10.

²¹ 2, KJV, TITUS 3:5a.

²² 8, Jerome Bible Commentary, TITUS 2:11-14, p 895. 21, “(iii) Reason: GOD’s Saving Action.”

²³ 8, Jerome Bible Commentary, TITUS 3:3-8, p 895. 22, “(ii) Reason: GOD’s Saving Action.”

²⁴ 8, Jerome Bible Commentary, TITUS 3:3-8, p 895. 22, “(ii) Reason: GOD’s Saving Action.”

²⁵ 4, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, p 1356, paragraph 2. “From the Confessions of Saint Augustine, bishop. O Eternal Truth, True Love and Beloved Eternity.”

It is the great mercy of The King of the universe which rescues us back to Himself from our darkness, and not we ourselves. We are the saints of GOD, secured by The Blood of The Lamb of GOD, and not by any works of righteousness which we may work. So The psalmist declares in PSALM 100:3, “Know ye that The LORD He is GOD: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.”²⁶ Saint Padre Pio instructs us here, “Therefore you have no other arms with which to carry yourself, other than His; no other breast on which to rest, except His and his Providence. Don’t look anywhere else, and don’t dwell on anyone except Him.”²⁷

By His Grace, you belong to The Lord, bought by His precious Blood upon The blessed Cross because of His boundless Divine Love that pursues you daily. As Saint Padre Pio says further, since you are totally in His hands, seek to “clothe yourself in JESUS CHRIST crucified.”²⁸ For you are so precious to The Almighty that, even if you were the only soul ever redeemed from sin and death into righteousness and eternal life in all of human history, He would still have paid That Price gladly on the Cross!

Saint Peter declares this, that we being saved by His Grace, our works of righteousness then flow forth as a result of our being in CHRIST, as in II PETER 1:1-4, “Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of JESUS CHRIST, to them that have obtained like precious Faith with us through the righteousness of GOD and our Saviour JESUS CHRIST: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of GOD, and of JESUS our Lord, According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises: that by these ye might be partakers of The Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”²⁹

²⁶ 2, KJV, PSALM 100:3.

²⁷ 5, The PSALMS with Saint Padre Pio, PSALM 100:3, p 116, paragraph 2. “Clothe Yourself in JESUS.”

²⁸ 5, The PSALMS with Saint Padre Pio, PSALM 100:3, p 116, paragraph 3. “Clothe Yourself in JESUS.”

²⁹ 2, KJV, II PETER 1:1-4.

The price of our salvation is paid for by the self giving up of The Son of GOD on The Cross, which He has called us to receive and live again in from before He set down the foundations of creation. We are GOD's people only because of what He has done for us, and not anything that we have done for Him. So Saint Paul declares in EPHESIANS 2:8-10, "For by Grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of GOD: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained that we should walk in them." ³⁰

VIII. WE ARE BORN AGAIN IN HIS SPIRIT UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS

TITUS 3:5, "...[but] by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of The HOLY... [SPIRIT];" ³¹

Here we have The Sacrament of Baptism ordained by CHRIST where the sign of outer washing is the portal of official entry of the faithful into The Church on earth, accompanied by the internal cleansing of the soul of the stains of Original Sin, marks the entry of the faithful into hope of The Church Eternal Above. The saints of GOD in CHRIST are made into new creatures in Him by the working of The HOLY SPIRIT, thus cleansing the inside of the cup, that the outside of the vessel may be made clean also. And though we still fall into sin after Baptism, He is there at The blessed Cross, always calling us to confess and repent of our daily sins, granting us pardon and renewal, comfort and strength, in The Sacraments of Reconciliation. As Saint John declares in I JOHN 1:9 to the already baptized in CHRIST, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." ³²

What must we do to be saved? As Saint Peter declares to those who hungered for The LORD in his day, so The faithful Church has declared ever since, as in ACTS 2:38, "...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in The Name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive The Gift of The HOLY GHOST!" ³³ Baptism then

³⁰ 2, KJV, EPHESIANS 2:8-10.

³¹ 2, KJV, TITUS 3:5b.

³² 2, KJV, I JOHN 1:9.

³³ 2, KJV, ACTS 2:38.

washes away the stain of Original Sin from over our souls. The daily battle as faithful Christians is then set before us, being to keep ourselves from sin, and to confess and repent when we sin again. For as Saint Paul observes in ROMANS 5:20, though we be convicted under The Law of GOD under Moses, "...where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound" for us at The Cross of CHRIST! ³⁴

The Catechism of The Catholic Church puts it so well, that although Original Sin is the inheritance of all men, it is not by any personal sin of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. Rather, "it is a deprivation of original holiness and justice" which partially corrupts us at conception, causing us to be "wounded in the natural powers... [pertaining] to it; subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death; and inclined to sin – an inclination to evil... Baptism, by imparting the [new] life of CHRIST's Grace [upon us], erases Original Sin and turns a man back toward GOD." However, we must daily work out our salvation because our natures remain "...weakened and inclined to evil." ³⁵ Entering into The Body of CHRIST at Baptism is, however, only the beginning, for He declares in LUKE 9:23, "...If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me!" ³⁶

And for the gift of salvation in CHRIST and our rebirth in His Spirit unto righteousness and the hope of eternal life, as The Wycliffe Bible Commentary observers, we should be humble and thankful for The Divine Love which pursues us in spite of our own sin and unrighteousness! For His working in our souls brings forth holiness in our thoughts, words and deeds, of which we receive only by His Grace. "The Grace of GOD is the root, the good works are the fruit." ³⁷ The HOLY SPIRIT washes our souls of iniquity and its stains, bringing forth our rebirth in His Likeness, as we have been made

³⁴ 2, KJV, ROMANS 5:20.

³⁵ 9, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 405, p 114. "The consequences of Adam's sin for humanity."

³⁶ 2, KJV, LUKE 9:23.

³⁷ 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, TITUS 3:1-11, p 1395, "(3) Demonstration of Sound Doctrine; The Root and The Fruit."

in His Image. His hand upon our souls brings the blessings of “the one work of The Spirit” in us.³⁸

Saint Augustine learns to hunger for communion with CHRIST, to be washed and renewed in His Spirit, to dwell in and receive His Presence, that he be made into His Likeness. He writes further, “...and I thought I heard Your voice from on High: ‘I am The Food of grown men; grow then, and You will feed on Me. Nor will you change Me into yourself like bodily food, but you will be changed into Me!’”³⁹ The soul that hungers for communion with The Creator is fed by His Presence, Which brings forth a regeneration and renewal into the righteousness of GOD. Therefore we are called to receive both the sign of new life in Him and He Who washes our souls into newness of life!

Here we may recall the wonder of Nicodemus, that learned Leader of the Israelite Sanhedrin who came to JESUS by night, when The Lord said to him in JOHN 3:5, “...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of The Spirit, he cannot enter into The Kingdom of GOD.”⁴⁰ The old sinful nature of men must be washed away, and by The HOLY SPIRIT, a man’s soul must be washed clean and remade in CHRIST. The baptism of water signifies the salvation and washing of the soul in The Lord. The baptism by The Spirit of GOD brings that new birth in Him, that we may dwell in His Presence in both this world and in Eternity.

David hungered for just this regeneration and renewal of his soul by The Spirit of GOD, when he cried out in sorrow for his sins to The LORD in PSALM 51:1, “...Have mercy upon me, O GOD, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.”⁴¹ As Saint Padre Pio observes here, The HOLY SPIRIT is The Divine Physician Who works to cure our unholiness and rebellion which stains our souls before His Presence, and so “...each soul must learn to

³⁸ 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, TITUS 3:5, p 1395-1396.

³⁹ 4, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, p 1356, paragraph 2. “From the Confessions of Saint Augustine, bishop. O Eternal Truth, True Love and Beloved Eternity.”

⁴⁰ 2, KJV, JOHN 3:5.

⁴¹ 2, KJV, PSALM 51:1.

allow itself to be handled, planed and smoothed by The Divine Spirit, when He also acts as The doctor of our souls, so that, having been well-planed and smoothed, we can be united and joined to The Will of GOD” both now and forever.⁴²

David cries out further, knowing that only by GOD’s Grace is a man washed of his sins and made whole, in PSALM 51:10-11, “Create in me a clean heart, O GOD; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy Presence; and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me.”⁴³ As Saint Padre Pio says further, “The sign of [Christian] perfection is that of being submitted to The divine Will in the trials of the spirit.... [The Church, The very Body of CHRIST then] is a hospital for the spiritually ill who wish to be cured...” of their sin-sickness at The blessed Cross.⁴⁴

“In order to be healed, [we must] desire to bear the treatment and correction of The Divine Doctor, and beseech Him not to spare you in anything in order to save you.”⁴⁵ For only then may we cry out in joy to The Lord and sing His praises both now and forever before His Throne, “Lord JESUS, make me and mold me according to Your Will in Your righteousness and in Your truth, both now and forever!” Only then may we join David, Saint Paul, Saint Augustine and all the saints of GOD, and receive The Divine Love Who pursues us, in answer to our plea as in PSALM 51:2, O LORD, “Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!”⁴⁶

IX. GREAT IS HIS GRACE TO US IN THE MESSIAH JESUS

TITUS 3:6, “Which He shed on us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour;”⁴⁷

So we see that it is The Divine Love of The Creator Who pursues us at The blessed Cross to bring us into His Kingdom of blessings in this life and into His Kingdom of Eternal Joy in the next, and not by any works of righteousness which we might perform, that we might somehow merit His Grace. John Calvin observes rightly then,

⁴² 5, The PSALMS with Saint Padre Pio, PSALM 51:11, p 67, paragraph 1. “Divine Doctor.”

⁴³ 2, KJV, PSALM 51:10-11.

⁴⁴ 5, The PSALMS with Saint Padre Pio, PSALM 51:11, p 67, paragraph 2. “Divine Doctor.”

⁴⁵ 5, The PSALMS with Saint Padre Pio, PSALM 51:11, p 67, paragraph 3. “Divine Doctor.”

⁴⁶ 2, KJV, PSALM 51:2.

⁴⁷ 2, KJV, TITUS 3:6.

that “it is The Spirit of GOD Who regenerates us, and makes us new creatures; but because His Grace is invisible and hidden, a visible symbol of it is beheld in [The Sacrament of] Baptism.”⁴⁸

As Saint Augustine continues in his “Confessions,” we read, “I sought a way to gain the strength which I needed to enjoy You [O GOD]. But I did not find it until I embraced ‘The Mediator between GOD and men, The Man CHRIST JESUS, Who is above all, GOD blessed for ever.’”⁴⁹ Only in CHRIST is there peace for our souls before The Almighty, where the infinite Divine Love calls us to as He pursues us! Here John Calvin observes of GOD’s Grace towards us, that no one [who is redeemed in CHRIST] has received so small a measure that he may not be justly accounted rich; for the smallest drop of The Spirit (so to speak) resembles and ever-flowing fountain, which never dries up!”⁵⁰ When we embrace The Man JESUS CHRIST as Lord and Saviour, o how much joyous blessing is there for us in His Divine Love at The Cross!

As Pope John Paul II says, Divine “Mercy in Itself, as a perfection of The infinite GOD, is also infinite. Also infinite therefore and inexhaustible is the Father’s readiness to receive the prodigal children who return to His Home. Infinite are the readiness and power of forgiveness which flow continually from the marvelous value of the sacrifice of The Son. No human sin can prevail over this power or even limit it!”⁵¹ Indeed is our Lord JESUS CHRIST The Divine Mercy of The LORD Incarnate for us, now entering fully the world of men which He created, The Coming in His full Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Who He declared Himself to be to Moses in EXODUS 34:6, “...The LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth!”⁵²

⁴⁸ 10, Calvin’s Commentaries, Volume XXI, TITUS 3:5, p 334. “And of the renewing of The HOLY SPIRIT.”

⁴⁹ 4, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, p 1356, paragraph 3. “From the Confessions of Saint Augustine, bishop. O Eternal Truth, True Love and Beloved Eternity.”

⁵⁰ 10, Calvin’s Commentaries, Volume XXI, TITUS 3:6, p 335. “6. Which He shed.”

⁵¹ 11, Wisdom of Pope John Paul II, p 45, 1st quote. Chapter on “Morality” from “Encyclical: Mercy of GOD (Dives in Misericordia), 1980.”

⁵² 2, KJV, EXODUS 34:6.

What is our hope, from amidst our sin that separates us from The Almighty, of obtaining His forgiveness and restoration both now and forever? It is only in our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, Who is The Divine Love Incarnate always pursuing us, of Whom Pope John Paul II says further, “No human sin can erase The Mercy of GOD or prevent Him from unleashing all His triumphant power, if we only call upon Him. Indeed, sin itself makes even more radiant The Love of The Father. In order to ransom a slave, He sacrificed His Son; His Mercy toward us is redemption” itself at The blessed Cross!⁵³

Thus is Saint Augustine’s often quoted confession, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You!”⁵⁴ Augustine echoes Saint Paul’s Words in I TIMOTHY 2:3-6, that GOD desires that all men come to salvation, calling all to come to Him by The Mediator JESUS CHRIST, Himself GOD Incarnate: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the Truth. For there is one GOD, and one Mediator between GOD and men, The Man CHRIST JESUS; Who gave Himself a ransom for all...!”⁵⁵

X. BY HIS GRACE WE ARE BORN AGAIN IN HIM BOTH NOW AND FOREVER
TITUS 3:7, “That being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”⁵⁶

Here The Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes abundantly and richly The Almighty blesses us His saints in CHRIST, and how undeserved and unworthy we are before His throne, that He should love us so: “The Spirit is true riches, in that He is The Earnest of our inheritance and The Source and Creator of all blessing.” It is GOD our Saviour “that gives the result of the gift of The Spirit, ‘so that in being justified by His

⁵³ 12, Pope John Paul II – His Essential Wisdom, p 80, 3rd quote. “Veritatis Splendor, 1993.”

⁵⁴ 12, Pope John Paul II – His Essential Wisdom, p 53, 3rd quote. “Evangelium Vitae, 1995.” Pope John Paul quotes Saint Augustine on man’s purpose, “Because he is made by GOD and bears within himself an indelible imprint of GOD, man is naturally drawn to GOD. When he heeds the deepest yearnings of the heart, every man must make his own the words of truth expressed by Saint Augustine, ‘You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.’”

⁵⁵ 2, KJV, I TIMOTHY 2:3-6.

⁵⁶ 2, KJV, TITUS 3:7.

Grace, we become heirs according to the hope, eternal life” in The Messiah JESUS.⁵⁷ Such is the fulfillment of the purpose of all men, that they be adopted into The Kingdom of CHRIST, both now in this life and in the next, The Church both militant on earth and eternal in Heaven!

We are then only justified as righteous before The Judgement Seat of The Almighty if we are in and under The Image and Likeness of The Messiah JESUS The only Mediator and Redeemer. And this being received by His Grace, making us new again by His Spirit, we become the very sons and daughters of The LORD. Here alone is our sure hope of dwelling in His Presence and receiving His full blessings, not only in this life, but then forever in Heaven Above! John Calvin summarizes, “having been dead, we were restored to life through The Grace of CHRIST, when GOD The Father bestowed on us His Spirit, by whose power we have been purified and renewed. Our salvation consists in this; but because we are still in the world, we do not yet enjoy ‘eternal life,’ but only obtain it by ‘hoping’” in faith in The Lord!⁵⁸

Such is The Divine Love Which pursues us, as Father Walter Cizek observes, “This simple truth, that the sole purpose of man’s life on earth is to do The Will of GOD, contains in it riches and resources enough for a lifetime. ...to see each day and each day’s activities in its Light, it becomes more than a source of eternal salvation; it becomes a source of joy and happiness here on earth. ...the human will, when united with The Divine Will, can play a part in CHRIST’s work of redeeming all mankind... The wonder of GOD’s Grace transforming worthless human actions [and lives] into efficient means for spreading The Kingdom of GOD here on earth astounds the mind and humbles it to the utmost...!”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ 3, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, TITUS 3:6-7, p 1396.

⁵⁸ 10, Calvin’s Commentaries, Volume XXI, p 336. “Heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

⁵⁹ 7, Father Walter Cizek, “He Leadeth Me,” p 117, paragraph 2. “Chapter 12 – The Apostolate.”

Saint Augustine then continues, “He was calling me and saying: ‘I am The Way of truth, I am The Life.’ He was offering The Food which I lacked the strength to take, The Food He had mingled with our flesh. For ‘The Word became flesh,’ that Your Wisdom, by Which You created all things, might provide milk for us children.”⁶⁰ Only because GOD loves us so much, before He set the worlds in their places in the heavens, He determined to come in The Incarnation to buy our lives and souls out of the hands of darkness and death back to Himself with His own Body and Blood given up for us on The blessed Cross!

JESUS CHRIST Himself declares, as Saint John declares in JOHN 6:51-54, that he who receives The Lord in faith shall receive eternal life: “I am The Living Bread Which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of This Bread, he shall live for ever: and The Bread that I will give is My Flesh, Which I will give for the life of the world... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat The Flesh of The Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”⁶¹

XI. THE DIVINE LOVE IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Here we come to The Sacrament of The Real Presence of JESUS CHRIST – in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – for which the righteous man hungers for. Like Augustine and the Apostles, we are called to Receive The Eucharist – The Great Thanksgiving – with hungry and thankful hearts, that we may be in Him and continue in Him, both now and into Eternity! So our Lord declared and instituted The Paschal Mystery at The Last Supper as in MATTHEW 26:26-28, “...JESUS took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; This is My Body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is My Blood of The New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”⁶²

⁶⁰ 4, Liturgy of The Hours, Volume IV, p 1356, paragraph 3. “From the Confessions of Saint Augustine, bishop. O Eternal Truth, True Love and Beloved Eternity.”

⁶¹ 2, KJV, JOHN 6:51-54.

⁶² 2, KJV, MATTHEW 26:26-28.

Those who have been baptized and confirmed in The Faith by The faithful Church are called to humbly and thankfully receive The Holy Communion, which as The Catechism of The Catholic Church says, “This... [CHRIST] 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!’”⁶³

Of the consecrated Bread and Wine of Holy Communion by the Priest within The faithful Church, Saint Justin Martyr – testifying of the practices of the very early Church – records, “...we call This Food ‘Eucharist,’ and no one may take part in It unless he believes that what we teach is true, has received baptism for the forgiveness of sins and new birth, and lives in keeping with what CHRIST taught.”⁶⁴

In The Eucharist we receive by faith The True Presence of JESUS CHRIST – our Mediator, Redeemer and Saviour – He Who saves us by His Grace, that we might be washed of our sins, made new in His Spirit, be adopted as His very sons and daughters even now in this life, and be assured of our sure hope of eternal life in Him in Heaven. As Saint John Chrysostom declares, “It is not man that causes the things offered to become The Body and Blood of CHRIST, but He Who was crucified for us, CHRIST Himself...!”⁶⁵

XII. IN CONCLUSION

From TITUS 3:4-7, we begin to see that The Divine Love of CHRIST JESUS pursues us. From the prayer of Saint Francis of Assissi, we begin to understand the nature of True Love – found Perfectly in GOD The Father, Son and Holy Ghost for us – as being other-centered and self giving. CHRIST loved us even when we were lost in sin.

⁶³ 9, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1323, p 368. “The Sacrament of The Eucharist.”

⁶⁴ 9, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1355, p 378. “St. Justin, Apol. 1,66, 1-2: PG 6, 428.

⁶⁵ 9, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1375, p 384. “St. John Chrysostom, prod. Jud. 1:6: PG 49, 380.”

He came as our Saviour because of His Great kindness and love towards us. We are saved, not because of any righteousness on our part, but because of His mercy. We are born again in His Spirit unto righteousness. For great is GOD's Grace to us in The Messiah JESUS. For by His Grace we are born again in Him, both now and forever. His Divine Love calls us to Himself in The Holy Eucharist.

Of The True Loving Presence of CHRIST in The Eucharist, Saint Thomas Aquinas writes:

Godhead here in hiding, Whom I do adore
Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more.
See, Lord, at Thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at The GOD Thou art!

Seeing, touching, tasting are in Thee deceived;
How says trusty hearing? That shall be believed;
What GOD's Son has told me, take for truth I do,
Truth Himself speaks truly or there's nothing true!⁶⁶

Let us close then by revisiting our Scripture Text from TITUS 3:3-7, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of GOD our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His Mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of The HOLY... [SPIRIT]; Which He shed on us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our Saviour; That being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ 9, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1381, p 386. "St. Thomas Aquinas (attr.), Adoro Te Devote; tr. Gerard Manley Hopkins."

⁶⁷ 2, KJV, TITUS 3:3-7.

And let us close with the proposition with which we began: The Divine Love of The LORD towards us is the highest order of love, in that – while we were yet sinners dead in our sin and in enmity towards GOD – The Creator Himself came Incarnate to suffer and die on The Cross to redeem us from sin and death back to Himself, though we by no means merited His sacrifice for us, but by His Grace we are raised again by His Spirit into new life with Him, both now and forever! In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost! Amen.

XIII. REFERENCES

1. Catholic Community Forum. <http://www.catholic-forum.com/> Not dated. Liturgical Publications of St. Louis, Inc.
2. “King James Version [Bible].” Bible Works 6. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.
3. “The Wycliffe Bible Commentary.” Edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer & Everett F. Harrison. The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Moody Press. 3rd printing, 1966.
4. “The Divine Office of The Liturgy of the Hours, According to The Roman Rite, Volume IV, Ordinary Time, Weeks 18-34.” International Commission on English in The Liturgy. Catholic Book Publishing Corp. New York. 1975.
5. “Praying The PSALMS with Saint Padre Pio.” Eileen Dunn Bertanzetti. Our Sunday Visitor, Inc. Huntington, Indiana. 2006.
6. “Matthew Henry Bible Commentary.” Bible Works 6. Bible Works, LLC. Norfolk, Virginia. 2003.
7. “He Leadeth Me.” Father Walter J. Ciszek, S.J., with Daniel L. Flaherty, S.J. Doubleday & Company, Inc. Garden City, New York. 1973. Reprinted by Ignatius Press. San Francisco, California.
8. “The New Jerome Biblical Commentary.” Edited by Raymond E. Brown, S.S.; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S. J.; Ronald E. Murray, O. Carm. Prentice Hall, Inc. Upper saddle River, New Jersey. 1990.
9. “Catechism of The Catholic Church.” United States Catholic Conference. Doubleday of Random House, Inc. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland. 1995.
10. “Calvin’s Commentaries, Volume XXI, GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, I & II THESSALONIANS, I & ii TIMOTHY, TITUS, PHILEMON.” John Calvin. Translated... by The Rev. William Pringle. Baker Book House Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A., reprinted 1981.
11. “The Wisdom of John Paul II – The Pope on Life’s Most Vital Questions.” Pope John Paul II. Compiled by Nick Bakalar and Richard Balkin. Introduction by Father John W. White. Harper Collins Publishers, Inc. San Francisco, California. 1995.
12. “Pope John Paul II – His Essential Wisdom.” Pope John Paul II. Edited by Carol Kelly-Gangi. Barnes & Noble Publishing, Inc. New York, New York. 2006.