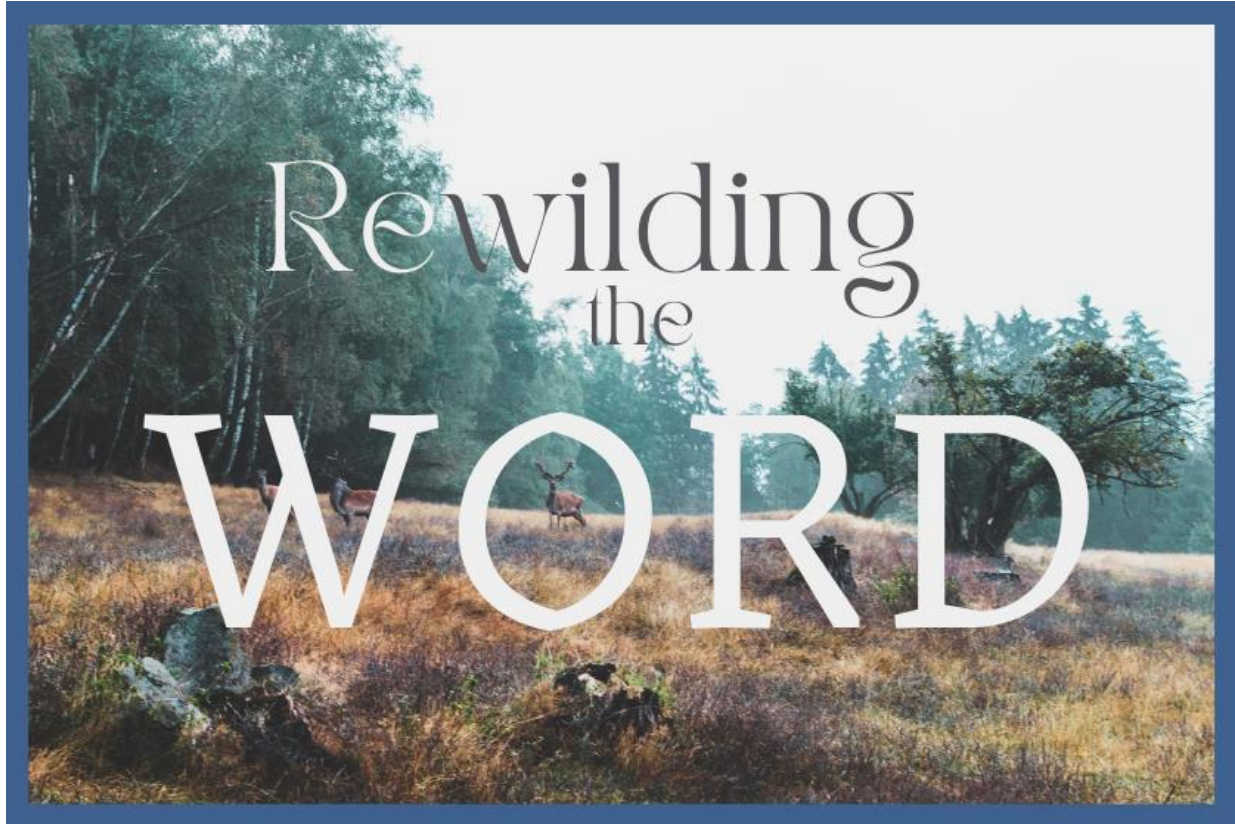


GANZ - REWILDING THE WORD #1



A Story

Years ago, I was taught by a man who did not *have* wisdom; rather Wisdom had him.

Proverbs 4 (NAB):

- ²⁰ My son, to my words be attentive,
to my sayings incline your ear;
²¹ Let them not slip from your sight,
keep them within your heart;
²² For they are life to those who find them,^c
bringing health to one's whole being.
²³ With all vigilance guard your heart,

^c Prv 8:35.

for in it are the sources of life.¹

A “wise” person is not defined by how much, or by what kind of, knowledge he or she has amassed, but by how much his or her existence is transparent to, or “magnifies”, the Spirit of Wisdom – the Holy Spirit – who dwells *unimpeded* within him or her. Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ (1844-1889), writes of Mary, Mother of God, who demonstrated what “unimpeded” looks like in a human being:

This one work has to do –
Let all God’s glory through,
God’s glory which would go
Through her and from her flow
Off, and no way but so.²

Because of my experience of Fr. Moreland, SJ, I finally understood what the expression “to be a temple of the Holy Spirit” meant. I had been assured that I *was* that, because of the Sacrament of Confirmation conferred on me by Bishop Topel (1903-1986; Bishop of the Diocese of Spokane from 1955-1978) when I was 11 years old (1965). I heard the words back then, but I did not yet understand them.

A Text

For those two years (1973-1975), five mornings a week, this man taught us a class – Theology, (Ignatian) Spirituality, and Philosophy. Once we were all in our seats, Fr. Moreland would pray aloud this prayer:

Direct, we beseech Thee, O Lord, all our actions by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit. Carry them on by this gracious assistance, so that every prayer and work of ours may always begin in you, and through you be happily ended.

Let us “slow down” this prayer, paying close attention to it.

A Reading

¹ *New American Bible*, Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Pr 4:20-23.

² Find the whole poem at: <https://hopkinspoetry.com/poem/the-blessed-virgin/>.

“Direct ... O Lord” - Does it not seem impertinent³ of us to *command* God to do something? “Direct” is a verb in the Imperative Mood, expressing a command. Such boldness! Yet, if we command God to do what God wishes us to command Him to do – *direct* all our actions – then for us to do so is an expression of trust. Think of the command that Jesus gave His disciples, when He told them to say to the Father: “Give us this day / our daily bread....” Why is it an act of trust for a humble person to command God in his or her prayer? Because if God were to respond to our command, then suddenly we are dwelling in God’s world and according to God’s vision for us and for the good of all. It takes trust *to let God do what God does!*

“We beseech Thee” – Abruptly we transition from commanding God to earnestly entreating God – “We beseech Thee, O Lord”. In contemporary American English we do not use “to beseech”, because it sounds medieval or “too churchy” – the kind of verb a too serious Priest might intone making us wonder whether he knows only his prayers but not God. Yet, the verb is a good one, because it expresses *the emotional involvement and sincerity* of us who are praying. The prefix *be-* attached to the verb “to seek” (“to seech” is an early English form of this verb and means the same thing), intensifies what the verb means. Thus, “to beseech” means “to seek or to look for *thoroughly, diligently,*” leaving no stone unturned if you will. Using a more religious way of expressing ourselves here, “to beseech” means “*wholeheartedly* to seek” this favor of God – that God “direct *all* our actions by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit.” Our beseeching reveals that we really want what we are commanding God to do. Emotionally detached praying is not praying, it is just words – our hearts are not *in* what we speak.

Matthew 6: ⁷ ‘In your prayers do not go babbling on like the heathen, who imagine that the more they say the more likely they are to be heard. ⁸ Do not imitate them, for your Father knows what your needs are before you ask him.⁴

“By the inspiration of your Holy Spirit” – We here learn, by this prayer’s use of “your”, that we have been praying to the three Divine Persons. How do we know this? Because it has been the conviction of western Christianity that the Holy Spirit is *of* the Father *and* the Son – it is theirs, *proceeding* from both, “from the Father *and* the Son”.⁵ It is a high-level prayer that we are praying when we boldly address the Holy Trinity!

³ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the adjective “**impertinent**”, where the meaning that I intend is this one: “**4. a.** Characterized by presumptuous speech or behaviour, or by intrusion or interference in that which is not one's concern; insolent; rude, disrespectful.”

⁴ [*The Revised English Bible*](#) (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne; Madrid; Cape Town; Singapore; São Paulo; Delhi; Dubai; Tokyo: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Mt 6:7–8.

⁵ In the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. - **Filioque** (Lat., ‘And the Son’) The dogmatic formula expressing the *double procession of the Holy Spirit, added by the W. Church to the

“So that every work of *ours*” - We might be surprised by, and so motivated to wonder why, this prayer uses the possessive adjective “ours”. We think that if we got our life into right order, then it would be about doing *God’s* work not *our* work – “so that every work of *His*”. The prayer does not say this. Part of the grandeur of God is that He has “room” in His unthreatened personality for each of us to pray and to do as we can, *to make of our life a work of art distinctly our own*. To do so pleases God, glorifies God, through the exercise of our capacities in creative and unexpected ways. God wishes us to *own* the works of our hands and then to show them to God with joyfulness. The true disciple of God and of the Kingdom of God is not a person *programmed* to pray and to act as one is *supposed* to, but a person who is creative and self-disciplined and set free by the Holy Spirit to do things beautiful for God, to become, if you will, *unexpected*. God, who in this regard is just like us, is One who likes to be surprised.

And Christ still sends me roses. We try to be formed and held and kept by Him, but instead God offers us freedom. And now when I try to know His will, His kindness floods me, His great love overwhelms me, and I hear Him whisper, “Surprise me.” [Hansen, Ron. *Mariette in Ecstasy* (p. 177). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.]

An Action

Memorize this short prayer and then begin to speak it daily. For example, this is a particularly good prayer to say as soon as one arises from bed in the morning. It sits well within the (Catholic) tradition of the “Morning Offering.”

Tags: wisdom, prayer, Trinity, work

Nicene-Constantinopolitan *Creed immediately after the words “ex Patre” in the article on the Holy Spirit (“who [proceeds] from the Father”). [The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (p. 3140). OUP Oxford. Kindle Edition.] One can move behind the technicalities of these theological distinctions and grasp that what we are given in the Holy Spirit is the *relationship* of the Father and the Son; we are invited into their own friendship of divine love and mutual indwelling.