

*Treatise XV, On the Common Life*, extracts: The Communion of Grace

by Abbot Baldwin of Ford

Guard me, O Lord, from grave sin which I fear much. Guard me from the hatred of thy love, lest I should sin against the Holy Spirit who is the bond of love, who is unity, peace, and concord: let me not separate myself from the unity of thy Spirit, from the unity of thy peace, by committing the sin which is forgiven neither here nor hereafter. Keep me, Lord, among my brethren and neighbors to tell of the peace which is from thee. Keep me among those who keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

My dearest brothers, let us anxiously attend to all that concerns the profession of our common life, keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the imparting of the Holy Spirit. From the love of God comes the unity of the spirit; from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ comes the bond of peace; from the imparting of the Holy Spirit comes that communion which is necessary to those who live in common, if they are to live in common.

...This unity which the love of God works in us is preserved in the bond of peace by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our peace who made of two peoples one; at whose birth the angels sang: "Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace to men of good will"; who when about to ascend into heaven said: "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give you."

Custodi me, Domine, ut pupillam oculi, custodi me a gravi peccato, quod valde timeo, ab odio amoris tui, ne peccem in Spiritum sanctum, qui est amor et nexus, unitas et pax et concordia, ne dissideam ab unitate spiritus tui, ab unitate pacis tuae, peccans peccatum, quod non remittetur hic neque in futuro. Conserva me, Domine, inter fratres meos, et proximos meos, ut loquar pacem de te; conserva me inter servantes unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis.

Fratres dilectissimi, quod ad professionem vitae communis pertinet, sollicite agamus; unitatem spiritus servantes in vinculo pacis, per gratiam Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et charitatem Dei, et communicationem sancti Spiritus. Ex charitate Dei unitas spiritus procedit; ex gratia Domini nostri Jesu Christi vinculum pacis; ex communicatione sancti Spiritus communio illa, quae communiter viventibus ut communiter vivant est necessaria.

...Haec autem unitas, quam in nobis efficit charitas Dei, servatur in vinculo pacis per gratiam Domini nostri Jesu Christi. Ipse est pax nostra, qui fecit utraque unum; in cujus nativitate concinunt angeli: *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis* (Luc. II). Qui ascensus in coelum discipulis dicit: *Pacem relinquo vobis, pacem meam do vobis* (Joan. XIV).

What is this peace given us by Christ in the bond of which the unity of the spirit is preserved? It is mutual charity by which we love one another, which remains unbroken if we are all of one mind and there are no divisions among us. St. Peter exhorts us on this point: “Above all things, preserve constant charity among yourselves.” What is this charity, if not what is mine and thine, so that I speak of it to him whom I love?...

This, then, is the law of the common life, the unity of the spirit in the love of God, the bond of peace in the mutual and constant love of all of our brothers, the sharing of all our goods, with every opportunity of possessing things as our own far removed from us by our purpose of living a holy religious life. That this may be our abiding intention, that we may have but one heart and one soul and all things in common, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the imparting of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.”

...I believe, O Lord, in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints. This is my hope, this is my trust, this is my confidence, this is the whole of my security in the professing of my faith: in the goodness of the Holy Ghost, in the unity of the Catholic Church, in the Communion of Saints.

If I am allowed moreover to love thee and to love my neighbor, though my merits are small and few, yet will my hopes reach beyond them. I am confident that the merits of the saints will help me by the communion of charity, so that the Communion of Saints will make up for my insufficiency and imperfection. The prophet comforts me saying: “To all things I see a limit, but thy commandment is exceedingly broad.” O broad and broadening charity, how great is thy dwelling, how immense the place of thy

Quaenam est haec pax, quae a Christo nobis datur, in cuius pacis vinculo unitas spiritus servatur? Haec est mutua charitas, qua nos invicem diligimus, quae non rumpitur, si idipsum dicamus omnes, et non sint in nobis schismata. De hac B. Petrus admonet, dicens: *Ante omnia mutuam charitatem continuam habentes* (I Petr. IV). Quae est mutua charitas, nisi quae mea est et tua, ut de ea ad alterum, quem diligo, loquar? ...

Haec est ergo lex vitae communis, unitas spiritus in charitate Dei, vinculum pacis in mutua et continua charitate fratrum omnium, communio in omnibus bonis communicandis, omni occasione habendae proprietatis a sanctae religionis proposito procul relegata. Ut haec in nobis sint, et in nobis maneant, tanquam habentibus cor unum et animam unam et omnia communia: *Gratia Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et charitas Dei, et communicatio sancti Spiritus, sit cum omnibus nobis. Amen* (II Cor. XIII).

...Credo, Domine, in Spiritum sanctum, sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam, sanctorum communionem. Hic est spes mea, hic est fiducia mea, hic est confidentia mea, hic est quantulacunque securitas mea in confessione fidei meae; in benignitate Spiritus sancti, in unitate Ecclesiae catholicae, in communionem sanctorum.

Si mihi datum fuerit desuper diligere te, et diligere proximum meum, quamvis merita mea parva sint et pauca, supra merita mea spem habeo ampliolem, confidens per communionem charitatis merita sanctorum mihi profutura, ut insufficientiam et imperfectionem meam supplere valeat sanctorum communio. Consolatur me Propheta, dicens: *Omnia consummationis vidi finem, latum mandatum tuum nimis* (Psal. CXVIII). O lata et dilatans charitas, quam magna est domus tua, et ingens locus possessionis tuae!

possession. Let our hearts not be constrained, let us not confine ourselves within the bounds and limits of any justice whatever. Let charity expand our hope as far as the Communion of Saints in the sharing of merits and rewards; but the sharing of the latter belongs to the future, for it is the sharing in the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Since, then, there are three communions—the first of nature, which includes the sharing of guilt and anger, the second of grace and the third of glory—by the communion of grace that of nature begins to be remade and the sharing of guilt to be excluded: but by the communion of glory that of nature will be perfectly restored and the communion of anger will be entirely excluded, when God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of the saints. Then among all the saints there will be one heart and one soul and all things will be in common, when God will be all in all. That we may all arrive at this communion and that we all may be one, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the imparting of the Holy Spirit be with us all for ever. Amen.”

Ne angustiemur in visceribus nostris, ne arctemur intra fines et limitem quantulaecunque justitiae nostrae. Dilatat charitas spem nostram ad communionem sanctorum, in communionem merito-rum et communionem praemiorum; sed communio praemiorum futuri temporis est, communio scilicet gloriae, quae revelabitur in nobis.

Cum itaque tres communionem sint, communio naturae, cui annexae sunt communio culpae, et communio irae; altera gratiae, tertia gloriae: per communionem quidem gratiae incipit reparari communio naturae, et excluditur communio culpae; per communionem vero gloriae perfectissime reparabitur communio naturae, et omnino excludetur communio irae, quando Deus absterget omnem lacrymam ab oculis sanctorum: et tunc omnium sanctorum erit quasi cor unum et anima una; et erunt illis omnia communia, quando erit Deus omnia in omnibus. Ut ad hanc communionem omnes perveniamus, et in unum conveniamus; *gratia Domini nostri Jesu Christi, et charitas Dei, et communicatio sancti Spiritus, sit semper cum omnibus nobis. Amen* (II Cor. XIII).