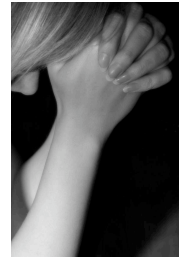


# The Sweet Guest of the Divorced Soul. . .

*How One Woman Found Peace Amid the Turmoil of Her Divorce*

by Karen Corrigan-Sermons

I'm just about the farthest person there is from a religious scholar, so it is, perhaps, a stroke of irony that I find myself writing about the Holy Spirit, a mystery of our Faith and something considered to be one of the most, well. . . mystifying.



Then again, perhaps it's not irony, but the prompting of the Holy Spirit, Himself. I wouldn't wonder at that. From my experience, that's kind of the way It works.

In those dark, dark days that marked the end of my marriage, I grasped at anything - secular or spiritual - that might stop the nightmare that I found myself in. As a lifelong Catholic, prayer was certainly one of those things. Erratic and frantic, my prayers were hardly worthy of the term, at least, that's what I thought. I prayed angry. I prayed desperate. I prayed to God asking, "Please! Please! Stop this terrible thing that was happening! I would later realize - despite the extreme emotions fueling my prayers - that this communication with God was, in fact, the kind of prayer he desired from me. Open, honest communication.

But these prayers, prayed scattershot throughout the day, simply weren't producing the outcome I wanted. My husband and I were further from reconciling than ever. And, though I'm not proud to admit it, I had many moments of spiritual foot-stomping. I wanted results! I wanted to preserve my marriage and my family! Wasn't this a cause worthy of divine intervention?

It was at this time I started praying to the Holy Spirit.

Why the Holy Spirit? The answer is simple and perhaps, self-serving. I knew the Holy Spirit was powerful - scary powerful, and feeling utterly powerless, this appealed to me greatly. Turning to the Holy Spirit was an act of faith for me, no question, but it was hardly a disinterested one.

Like a carpenter turning to a shiny power tool to get the job done, I prayed to the Holy Spirit. Now, if I expected these prayers to dramatically change the circumstances of my life, I couldn't have been more disappointed. My husband left. All at once, I was alone with two children, one a six-month old. I was unemployed, having stopped working to have the baby.

But things were changing, nevertheless. Not from without, but from within. While I had no clearer idea what God's will in my life might be, I stopped making demands of Him. This truly was a gift of the Holy Spirit - and one that has resulted in more peace than I could have ever imagined. I also had strength and energy that I had no business having, being woken up routinely through the night by my six-month old. This, too, was a gift. My prayer life became easier and far richer, and I found myself experiencing moments of extreme joy, such as I had not felt before in my life.

I was, and am, intensely grateful for these gifts. But I was also intrigued. Just what had I tapped into here? Despite years of CCD in the late 70's, I knew very little about the nature of the Holy Spirit.

Prompted by my experiences (and the writing of this very article) I've learned more. And what I've learned corresponds so beautifully to what I experienced myself. I've learned that, as in own experience, the Holy

Spirit works from within, not without. In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to the Holy Spirit as the "The One whom the Father has sent into our hearts" (CCC no. 689). I've learned of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of the Lord and I'm awed to realize that I've been blessed with these very gifts, especially Fortitude. Most recently, I've been learning about the fruit of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control (Galatians 5:19-23) and do I ever want more of those things in my life.

So through my imperfect understanding and prayer, I reached out to and was filled by the most perfect balm for the pain of my divorce. And I guess that's my point, the whole reason I've felt so compelled to write this, despite feeling so very unqualified to do so. I wanted to share the idea that the very things in a divorce that are the most destructive and soul-wrenching - the fear, the uncertainty, the sadness, the anger, the weakness and feelings of hopelessness - for me were the very things for which the Holy Spirit offered most comfort.

During your divorce, you may not be able to change what is happening from without, but with the aid of the Holy Spirit you can be fortified from within.

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