

# The Holy Ghost, Yours, Mine (and Theirs?)

Sept. 23, 2012

## The (Holy) Spirit in the Lutheran Church



The Church is: *The people of God (invisible, that is, who have faith cannot be seen), gathered around Christ (Mt. 18.20), being made holy (1 John 3.2) by the means of Grace (visible church).*

All things belong to the church, that is, God's believers (1 Cor. 3.21). What does this mean? All believers have as their own:

- Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Father; God is their Father and they his children when converted.
- The entire Word of God, the Bible, the witness of Christ which creates/sustains their faith.
- Shared stewardship (responsibility for) of properly using/teaching the Doctrine of Christ.
- A priesthood of God (that is, a sacrificial service to the church and the world through Christ).
- Office of the Keys: **care** for those who *appear to be* in faith and those who **manifestly are not**.
- A duty to place **men** in the order of **God's Public Office** to administer the saving gifts of God.
  - To publicly proclaim the Word to the community from the church.
  - To teach both the unbeliever (unto Baptism) and those growing in faith (the Baptized).
  - To publicly hand out Christ's instituted grace to those who have a share in Christ.
  - To publicly carry out the God-pleasing decisions of the Congregation.
- A share in the feast that begins on earth and has no end.

*What does this mean?* The Lutheran Church is **gathered around Christ** in the institutions (means of Grace) where he has promised to be found. Thus the Lutheran church has these priorities:

1. The Word of God the Bible; as the ultimate authority, and the Lutheran Confessions that are the sole correct confession of Biblical doctrine, tell us of Christ, our Savior the Word (the Bible) made flesh.
2. The Church must, as next priority, be guided and obedient to the Spirit found in the Word of Christ, his "all things." Thus teaching and Baptism are never given a second pew, nor the corresponding learning and faith/sanctification that teaching and Baptism work in us by the power of the Spirit. The church (all the people) thus receive everything from God as a gift, and are, then, responsible if they allow them to be misused, buried or lost through human doctrine. The Spirit's church is "conservative" because the perfect revelation of God cannot be added to or subtracted from, but only conserved as given. Innovation in the church is sin when used to diminish or replace the "all things" of Christ.
3. Holy Ghost, as thirdly, makes the church concerned for each member, to be the 'brother's keepers,' that is, he sees to it that members encourage each other to receive grace weekly, as we all promised God in our confirmation vows, but warn brothers and sisters who are departing from grace or falling into a open life (1 Cor. 5). This is not the pastor's but every believers responsibility. We must excise the leavens of those living in open sin from the congregation until they repent and amend their lives. The church is also concerned that our pastor "hear one's faith" before he commune anyone.
4. The Holy Spirit works through the Office of Pastor to carry out God's public work. Since he conducts his office solely by the Word of God as confessed in Christendom only in the Lutheran Confessions, he does the will of God and God's people. If he acts according to God's Word and some members condemn his actions and his guidance from God's Word and the Confessions, such people, not submitting to God's Word, must also be told by the church (all the members) that they are unacceptable to God. Those who refuse to be taught/corrected by God and are thereby not Christians.

What is not mandated by Christ in his Word is freely decided by God's people as best suits their situation and service to others, but all of those decisions MUST be made that allow, above all, for the free-course and use of Christ's "all things."