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**HOLY SPIRIT AS THE *COMMUNIO*
AND THE GIFT IN FORMULATION
OF JOSEPH RATZINGER
(NOTES ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY
OF SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO)**

THE INTRODUCTION

Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI in his lecture the „Holy Spirit as the *Communio*” undertakes analysis of the question from the point of the theological sight, finding the connection sources of the title „Holy Spirit” on the lexical, dictionary and hermeneutical plane. The problem is complicated, in terms of theory, thought and experience. The latin word *communio* descends from a noun *munus* (duty, task, obligation) and the preposition of *cum* (co-, from). The latin core *mun* can be translated as fortification, entrenchment, wall (latin *moenia* – the walls of the city, fortress, house, flat, palace)”¹.

The word *communio* has several different meanings: the community of authorizations (*communio iuris*), the community of goods (*communio beneficiorum*), the relations hip of the blood (*communio sanguinis*), corner stone (*communio parietis*). In the verbal form *communio* means to „strengthen”, and in the metaphor „confirm”. Joseph Ratzinger leads out the word *communio* from the Greek notion *koinonia* in his two si-

¹ Cf. Gisbert Greshake.

gnificative planes. The first one has a religious nature, while the second has its roots in secular meaning.

The „Holy Spirit” cannot be described in the same way as we describe the „own spirit”. Neither to treat it as „one’s” or „from one’s”, because his essence is that „he does not get from one’s”². The originality of the Spirit, which can change in the contradiction will not suffice. Only a description of the Spirit as the whole, as the „original community”, which is the Spirit of the Church, explains what the „Holy Spirit” is. J. Ratzinger concentrates his considerations on the „statement about Spirit in the history of the Church” and to the statement about “the life in the Spirit” which are in the texts of Augustine of Hippo. He leaves historical trinitarian discussions on the side. This doctrine was „in the use” for 1.5 thousands of years, so it can be considered as verified. It relates to the „essence of the Holy Spirit” and His name, which should be studied in the context of „the One who we define as light and love” what can be confirmed through „entering into their holiness and warmth”³.

THE NAME - „HOLY SPIRIT” AS AN INDICATION OF THE THIRD PERSON OF GOD THE TRINITY

In J 4, 24 we read that „God is the spirit”. In Jewish writings we can read that „God is holy”. To be the spirit and to be holy – are two „intrinsic qualifications of God”⁴. To be the spirit means to be something more than somebody of a numerical one, this is the kind of the widened Unity, which becomes the whole. The Spirit creates and belongs to the whole and He actively creates it as a complement of One Father, dyad of Father and Son - transforming it into the triad of the Father-Son-Spirit. It is worth adding that the triad in the ancient Greece symbolized the Whole. Therefore, God as the whole (gr. the Lord) is one in trinity, tri-named and tri-person. Theologians discovered that name in the Greek

² J 16,13

³ J. Ratzinger, *The Holy Spirit as Communio; Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality of Augustine*, Comm 25 (1998), p. 326.

⁴ Ibid.

and Jewish antiquity in various ways. In Christianity, it has a different character. In this case we are on the level of the revelation of holiness, as the ontological difference, which builds the ontological whole of the God-trinity.

J. Ratzinger identifies holiness with community, and what is common is also holy and eternal, inseparable, still lasting and becoming. No one can be holy for himself, there has to be some ontological pattern of holiness and God is that pattern. However, he is not a soloist God, loner, some autistic space subject, which keeps silent. Holiness is the divinity, which comes out in every human conversation as a divinity, human holiness. The pre-christian times were similar as also the christian times, where the revelation anthropologizes, discovering as anthropological „communio” (gr. *koinonia*), which somatizes oneself in the Jesus and becomes pneumatological, hidden and ocular. Holy becomes the name of the Third, who we can see in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is communion of the Father and the Son, it is what supports them in their existence in dyadic and triadic relation.

J. Ratzinger goes away from the monistic analysis, which was in the past leant on the search of substance unities, how it was e.g. in neo-platonism, and underlines: “The mediation of Father and Son comes to full unity not when it is seen as a universal, ontic *consubstantialis* but as *communion*. In other words, it is not derived from a universally metaphysical substance but from the person. According to the nature of God, it is intrinsically personal”⁵. This is a quite unique novelty for Polish theology, which is leant generally on a substantial model of the theological analysis. This is dialogical formulation, well known from the theology of K. Wojtyła or J. Tischner does not exactly concerns the name and the person of „the Holy Spirit”. Even personalistic analysis seems too weak in underlining the ontological validity of relationship and dialogue. The author implants us in the analysis, which induces us to go away from comfortable, but too stiff thought patterns, identifying holiness with stiff exclusiveness.

⁵ Ibid.

The Holy Spirit - understood as *communio* - has to realize as *ekklesia*, as a the whole community, but not any community. It has to be constructed according to the principle of the whole (the gr. *kath'holikos*). The Holy Spirit has the power to create community (gr. *energeia*) and this is not only because of his full triadic relation to the Trinity. J. Ratzinger suggests that Augustine proposed that „a bit of metaphysics of spirit has occurred at the same time”⁶. That is „the Spirit is the unity, which God gives himself. In this unity, He himself gives himself. In this unity, the Father and the Son give themselves back to one another. The Spirit’s own paradoxical and unique property is being *communio* having his highest selfness precisely in being fully the movement of *communion*”⁷. This is the triple unity, which is not static and dead, but dynamic and alive. God alone in its unity does not exist, such “God” might possibly exist as a plant or a stone, as an atom, but God cannot exist in such way if we take into account the relationship with human beings. That is, as I suppose the belief of J. Ratzinger.

Augustine gives John’s sentence “God is the spirit” not only ontological sense, differentiating the spirit and the matter, but also axiological and cosmological sense, unveiling God in relation - the World, as it is in the Greek ontologies. However it is about the entirely different world, meaning the religiously understood „entirely different” reality. J. Ratzinger means certain kind of religious ontology, where the religion does not only mean attachment⁸, but also the community (lac. *communio*). It is impossible – in his opinion– to reduce the ontology of the Holy Spirit to the ontology of earth or human in some inductive or reductive way. Holiness is understood here not only as the eminence above immanence, not only in metaphysical categories, but also in the dynamic relation of Father-Son. In this relation *communio* becomes the component of the spirit and obtains the personalistic dimension. The person who knows who the Holy Spirit is as the Spirit can more easily reach the knowledge about God, His Spirit and the Holy Spirit.

⁶ Ibid., p. 327.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cf., e.g. Joseph Tischner.

HOLY SPIRIT AS COMMUNITY OF LOVE

Novelty of Augustine's religion ontology is putting forward the thesis that the Holy Spirit is hidden or disclosed under names of love (lat. *caritas*) and gift (lat. *donum*). The sentence "God is love"⁹ defines God as undivided Trinity, and assigns ontological property of uniting to the Holy Spirit. The holiness of one man (gr. *hosiotes*) is complemented here by piety, the sanctifying relation (gr. *eusebeia*). J. Ratzinger does not mention that, because he supplements the sanctity by relational love - *caritas* and by the gift, which is considered in terms of relation. He insists therefore that otherwise we would have to deal with the reistic interpretation, which involves the realization of love and giving, but does not require their realization. They may only be the potentials that are never realized, "activated"¹⁰

We know the ideologies that promote social love and gift giving, but they cannot actually realize them (e.g. all totalitarian regimes, national socialism, marxism, communism, fascism, etc.). They realize them only sometimes. We must consider the theological dimension of *caritas* and *donum*, which is always (every day and night) finally realized, along with giving or transmitting the relationship of love and gift giving to others. Here, J. Ratzinger repeats a sentence from the first Letter of John, "God is love"¹¹. Next he shows that Christian pneumatology is not theocentric but "theo-relational"¹² and also dynamic.

Composing verses 12, 16b and 13:

- 1) "If we love one another, God abides in us" (v. 12).
- 2) "God is love, and who abides in love, abides in God" (in German: God abides in him) (v. 16b).
- 3) "We recognize that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit" (v. 13).

⁹ 1J, 4,16.

¹⁰ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*.

¹¹ 1J, 4,16.

¹² Cf. T. Kobierzycki.

J. Ratzinger notices, that Love or the Holy Spirit is provided by abidance. This is the identification of Love and the Holy Spirit; both are semantic and structural equivalents for each other. Spirit is God as love. Gift of God is the Holy Spirit, that is Love. Love is the presence of the Holy Spirit.

An intelligent text translator of J. Ratzinger showed the difference between the Polish and German translation of sixteenth verse. It is a difference not only stylistic, semantic, cultural, but also theological. Polish theologians wrote: "God is love, and who abides in love abides in God," and in the German translation we can read: "God abides in him." This timidity of polish interpreters of the Scripture is puzzling. It applies not only to this fragment. German theologians have no doubt that God-Love abides in man! It cannot be otherwise. This relationship is durable, lasts and does not die, even when a man says to God "no." While in the Polish version of the translation voluntarism appears, it is of human willing that the abidance in God is dependent.

I personally think that "abiding in God" is more fundamental than psychological; it would not be abiding in God, if there were no God, existence is first before wanting. And even, when we go through the way of voluntarism, more important is the will of God and not the will of a man, that is the margin for his love and his freedom. *Primum* is the existence and the will of God. In this perspective, *primus* becomes God-Love, the Holy Spirit. Not a holy man, excessive anthropologization reduces originality of God's existence, and the existence is reduced to the human dimension, moving the existence of God on the second plan. In many Polish translations there are a lot of anthropologizations like this, where the concept of God becomes of secondary plan.

The basic criterion of love is "abidance". This is not a passing love, flowing, but "spilling" permeating every depth of existence. This is not only a cleansing energy, as clean water cleanses dirty areas of the world, or as a water, which is a drink of life, flowing in rivers, and standing in lakes, seas or oceans, and frozen water, underground and above the ground, as on the poles of earth or above the atmosphere. It is the love of abidance and persistence, which strengthens the existence, creating the

substrate to form the lasting fruit that you can never eat and which can never be destroyed. So this is not an accidental love, seasonal affair, but existential love, which is lasting despite of casualness and destruction, which may be repeatedly exposed.

If the first name of God's love is abidance, the others are permanence and persistence, despite the changeability. "Love proves itself in constancy. Love is not recognizable right at any given moment, or in just one moment; instead, love abides, overcomes vacillation, and bears eternity within itself"¹³. In the language of evolutionary and existential psychology this "instability" is called ambivalence and ambitendency. The majority of the human race is surrendered to it, it is a behavior trace of Eve, Adam and the Snake in Paradise, but the man is completely created from the love of God, so the Spirit – The Holy constantly permeates the man with his love, clearly presented in Jesus Christ, as shown in the Gospels, the Fathers of the Church and Christian theologians inspired by thoughts of Augustine,.

Abidance is an indication that love is real, that it has an ontological character, not just physical or mental. Stability is a condition of the truth, and the truth involves some types of stability that allows to verify the variable reactions, thoughts and actions of man. J. Ratzinger adds: "Because love has to do with abiding, it cannot take place anywhere except where eternity is"¹⁴. The Holy Spirit is the breath of eternity, and therefore the breath of salvation, breath that introduces man into eternity. He saves him from the past, especially from the history that began in Paradise by the will of man. The Holy Spirit is the power that corrects errors of human actions, and saves the Son of God from the defeat of man, who was not afraid to think about killing God and who tried to kill Him in his own way, dragging – incarnated in Jesus God – to Golgotha, and beating in his hands nails of death. All of this was invented in the head of people who did not have the ability to recognize the order "Do not kill" and did not recognize the order of charity, which lasts in God and God in him.

¹³ J. Ratzinger, *The Holy Spirit as Communio*, op. cit, p. 328.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Love is from God (verse 7 of 16), and “God is from God,” because God is love. He gives the ability to realize this revelation by experiencing the relational love, “love of agape”. It is necessary to come to it in order to learn about its origins. It is possible to run away from it, but then *agaptike* also comes in meetings with other people, who give you a hand, save from illness, and even death. The gestures of selfless but necessary love, affected by the gesture of God, who materializes into a good human, in every latitude and longitude, in every race and gender, at any age, in life and in death. It is impossible to deprive human of that love – agape and he himself cannot deprive of it, though he may reduce personal feelings of it. A man may think that love is not given to him. He may think that he is not worthy of it, or that it has been taken away from him. This is not true, because it has a pointer or vector of eternity that despite of its own personal repositions, cleans from evil all the errors of time and space of individual and collective life. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of eternal good, which absorbs and heals existential wounds of the man.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE GIVER: GIVING AND GIFT

In the beginning there was the water, from water all came into being and all will turn in to it at the end –we could paraphrase this way the ancient definitions of the sources of life. All sources and elements: the fire, air, earth, etc. are included to this category of the sources of life. We find them in the Christian narratives, but they are differently interpreted there. The Main reference of this type J. Ratzinger finds in the Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman, who asked for water, and then identifies himself as the “better water”. Water semantics and symbolisms are rich in the Gospels. First of all water has causative connotations, nutritious so therefore water is a physical component of any food. It also has a meaning of a metaphysical food in the Gospels. There is a cycle: the thirst- water-living water. Relation water-thirst or thirst-water is not sufficient in describing the situation of a man on the spiritual plane, although it may be sufficient to describe the physical and carnal plane of

a man. Hence the concept of “living water”, meaning the water that also applies to the spiritual life.

The promise of “metaphysical water” was passed during the Feast of Tabernacles - “If anyone is thirsty, and believes in me - let him come to me and drink”¹⁵. Evangelist adds, “by this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him”¹⁶. This can be interpreted more physically, keeping in mind that the spirit (heb. *Ruah*) hovered over the waters. This word translates as a mist or a vapor that rises above the bio-physical and chemical structure of water, nourishing the plants, but also nourishing breath of living beings, animals and humans, who by inhaling steam may simply live, thanks to the air components, also including water. It is physically living water, because otherwise humans may suffocate and die. Joseph Ratzinger says that these and other terms allow Augustine to link the metaphors with christological pneumatology. Christ - “He and He alone is the fresh water, without which there is no life”¹⁷.

The gift of life is the most important gift, every human being receives it from the Existence; from the world’s Being, from the God’s Being arises a human Being. Gift of Life is a Holy Spirit’s gift and of the Holy Spirit. God is the source of all sources, these are: the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit comes from the Father, but as a given, not as born (*non modo quo natus, sed quomodo datus*). Therefore, He is not called the Son, because He is not born as the only Son, or made in such way as we are (*natus neque ... neque factus*)” (Augustine, the Trinity, tr. M. Stokowski, Cracow 1996, V 15, 16). Augustine distinguishes three ways of originating of God: born, given, made (*natus, datus, factus*). Spirit can be given. “The movement of giving is the specifically holy, spiritual movement”¹⁸.

The Holy Spirit is the gift of God, He is God in giving, in His dispensing, He is God understood as a gift “(...) The gift of God is God himself”¹⁹.

¹⁵ John 7, 37.

¹⁶ John 7, 39.

¹⁷ J. Ratzinger, *The Holy Spirit as Communio*, op. cit, p. 330.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 331.

The Holy Spirit is the gift for human life and the gift of love for a man. A man once became the God in Jesus Christ. Other people are not gods, but they have gift to reflect the divinity, the gift of intense participation in it – we call them saints. But all people have the gift of life that comes from God and is God, His complex particle in the body of every human being. The Holy Spirit is the energy and talent of eternal life.

We can kill a man but we cannot kill the Spirit who is in a man, which is greater than his carnal death and spiritual death. The Holy Spirit is the source of metaphysical life plane, which is physically lost in the matter and dies, and when it loses itself in the Holy Spirit, it gains life, because then it lives by God's living - the Holy Spirit. It returns to the existence of God, who is the whole bonding of life and death of man in the Triune Being mode.

J. Ratzinger pays attention not only on the identification of God's Gift with the gift of life and the gift of love, but also with the gift of "bread." The prayer "Our Father" tells us about this - "Give us this day our daily bread." Bread is ours and not ours, it is the bread of the land and people, but also it is the bread of God and heaven. In this prayer for the Gift there are many indicators of this gift - God as a father, the sky, the name, the will, the kingdom, the earth, and then the bread as a gift of life, just like the water is a gift of earth's and heaven's life. This gift could not have been achieved if not for the Giver (God - the Holy Spirit) and recipient - a man - in debt to God, wanting the gift of God for the liberation of all debts of life. We often forget that the Gift Giver gives himself to the indebted by various forms of life and death, to be able to survive in a way that frees him from these debts, giving liberation and freedom, which is a condition for love.

A Man mixes gifts of the Holy Spirit with his own gifts, which are treated by him as sacred. This mistake sometimes becomes reason of many existential dramas. The closeness of God - the Holy Spirit does not mean that man can use them independently and willfully. The condition of that benefit is the exchange, taking and giving. Thanks to this, dynamism of "Holy Spirit" is realized, which cannot be privatized, commercialized, and must be given free, without counting on the fact that this exchange

will be executed immediately. Joseph Ratzinger pays attention to the patience of the Holy Spirit, the distance that occurs during the exchange, which is an intimacy transferred to the eternity. That eternity is not a later satisfaction of human needs. It is a form of realization of the current life, love and the gift of its physical and metaphysical dimensions.

The man has a pattern of this realization but not in the exchange of banking, cash or store, but in a spiritual exchange, which does not need a profit and a percent of its existence and actions. Life does not know the price, like the Gift of God, which is the Gift of his Fatherhood, as a Sonship's Gift and gift of the Holy Spirit. "Without *caritas* everything else, faith, deeds are nothing, absolutely nothing"²⁰. Faith alone cannot save, also demons have faith. "Without love, faith can "exist but not save", *esse non prod-esse*, we read in the inimitable Latin of the bishop of Hippo"²¹. Saving faith works through love, without love faith is fruitless, barren and demonic. We can see this in a variety of social pathologies, and unfortunately in church.

Extremely interesting are the considerations of J. Ratzinger about love, which is not only a psychological or sociological phenomenon, which is not also the opposite of the law, as it is often understood in previous analysis of theology, but it is the law itself. It has a judicial character, and so it is the foundation of axiology. Without a doubt, it has to be the basis of the christological axiology. Love itself is a judgment. We can see the impact of onto-axiological thinking that existence assimilates with the value and where each of its kind is connected to a certain level, a plane or a fragment of existence, with each of its particle. Above all, this applies to association with axiology relating to the man as a person. A similar approach can be found for example in M. Scheler, and in Poland – in a bit different way – in J. Tischner. Examining the analysis of J. Ratzinger, it is surely worth to examine these topics closer.

J. Ratzinger's reflections about the Holy Spirit is concentrated on the Church, which has to be institutionally and personally controlled by the

²⁰ Ibid., p. 332.

²¹ Ibid.

dynamics of love. It has to be – in the language of the computers – love server, hard drive or controller, in which love is saved and can be activated as a global communication, universal and personal. Personalization of love and personalized power of love is a fundamental discovery of Christianity. That novelty always demands the discovery and improvement. Love is needed for normal human development and also as prophylaxis against various individual and systemic pathology. Forgetting this fact leads us to a distortion of Christian doctrine. Donatists who trespassed against love are an example of it from the past. “They have departed from the true faith because they have placed their own idea of perfection above unity”²².

This diagnosis is current today, where perfectional individualism is opposed by some clerics, and even theologians of a unifying community nature of love. God is a community of love, not the exclusive owner of the gift which He shares with only some people. Love is given with love, if it is not, there it is a parody of love. Love focuses on community absorbs all attacks of evil and its everyday symptoms in mind, words and deeds of man, which excludes from its “charitable” acts, acts of love. Selfish love is love for anyone, it easily turns into anti-love. This kind of parodied love kills the one who practices it and kill others, to whom it is addressed.

From subtle analysis of J. Ratzinger we can draw out the point: “There is no (i.e., in God) subordinate position the given nor a lordship of the giver but the harmony (*concordia*) of the one Given and the Giver”²³. Moreover the author recalls an earlier analysis of Augustine, that the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of the Two”. Love and Gift poses inner unity. We could further radicalize the interpretation of Augustine and Joseph. The principle of equality and unity, which the Holy Spirit is promoter, has another indicator of his power, it is the replacement. Giving cannot be one-sided, taking cannot be one-sided. Both should be realized by an equivalent replacement.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., p. 331.

A man cannot accept a passive recipient attitude. He has the ability to actualize himself simultaneously in the giving and taking, in spiritual and material acts, which are subject to the equivalent process, and therefore equal rights, unifying exchange. Then it is possible to non-mercantile, life support exchange, which raises man from the existential bottom or brings him from paranoid high, pseudo-spiritual position to the level of the ground. It puts him to his feet when he detaches too much from his human qualities, pointing him the right place of being. The Holy Spirit is the power of love, which restores in a man his state of mental and physical balance, allowing him to keep moderating the occupied horizontal and vertical position, in the heat of the day, in which he loses his orientation and realistic sense of his own value.

THE END

I remember from my childhood a well-known sentence “The Holy Spirit blows where He wills”. He has a breath of freedom, and even some kind of children’s fantasies about freedom. Childishness is a universal condition, which results in easy contact with all other people, animals, plants or even the stars. The Holy Spirit is universal, open to the world as full of joy, innocent child. The freedom of a child manifests his inherent love for the world. A child cannot live without love, understood as freedom. The Holy Spirit encourages the child to love, and then learn how to understand the commitment of love, which should never turn into slavery. Every love should always be associated with freedom. Thus, the Holy Spirit is identified with love, with freedom. The Holy Spirit is selfless, but He is empathetic, interested in all the states of human slavery, individual and collective. He can trigger human from any addiction.

Augustine was interested in finding answers, how to solve the theological dilemma of freedom and slavery. He tied the love with freedom, with the idea of “building a house”, which is a fundamental human knowledge about the relationship of love, freedom, permanence and unity. If the Holy Spirit is a symbol of love and freedom, he is

symbolon (gr. symbole - link). The opposite of him is Satan, who shared love and freedom, sets them against, he is the devil, diabolon (gr. diable - share), he distracts, makes inflation and reduces their sense of power and importance of the Holy Spirit. "The devil is captivity, man's bondage, exile, a luring away from self"²⁴. Each house is a synthesis of love and freedom, lack of this synthesis turns home into physical, social, psychological, spiritual disrepair, the devilish wheel, which produces bread of death, not the bread of life, in which in people instead of heaven condition identify hell condition. This metaphor also applies to national, government or even religious groups. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of the building and the struggle for love and freedom, the fight without violence, struggle without a fight, which takes the form of a "better water", a better love than the one which a man contaminated with sin is able to express.

The Holy Spirit is a teacher and a doctor; He is the power which supports systems of human life, work, development in all – bad and good – situation. We need to keep this in mind when we think that nothing good and nothing bad can no longer happen. Our life without the care of the Holy Spirit would be exposed to the confusion of the senses, thoughts, and the confusion of languages that do not allow for an agreement with ourselves and with others. The Holy Spirit is the creative power of the community, "the one who is the power of communication, mediating it, making it possible and is himself a Person"²⁵.

We need a talent of communication of the Person of the Holy Spirit, His talent of love and of freedom, the talent of living at home and in the world that is the home of homes of all human beings, and the house of God, in which we are born and in which we die, heading toward God the Trinity.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 335.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 327.