

Dear friends in Christ,

Saint Peter Damien (1007-1073) is a Doctor of the Church, and was described by Pope Benedict XVI as "one of the most significant figures of the 11th century ... a lover of solitude and at the same time a fearless man of the Church, committed personally to the task of reform"

Saint Peter Damien wrote of the Holy Spirit and I believe his insights can be helpful to all of us. Damien writes: "Without the grace of the Holy Spirit no man, however hard he struggles and strives, can rise to good works or bring forth fruit pleasing to God." He notes that a tree, rooted in the earth, draws life on the ground's moisture, which spreads through all of its parts, bringing growth and setting forth buds and twigs. He likes the faithful to trees in a grove ( the Church) planted by the great Forester ( Christ).

What is expected of us? Saint Peter says: "If, then, we do not wish to be burned like baron trees, if we fear to be hewn down with the axe and cast into the fire, let the root of our hope cling closely to the bonds of love to the humanity of our Redeemer ... that we may grow in strength and power and send forth the fruit of good works. But, just as a tree withers if it is deprived of... moisture... so our souls, unless watered by the dew of the grace of the Holy Spirit, dry up, and are unable to produce any buds of good works. For He pours light into our minds, arouses our desire and gives us strength. He gives us light, that we may see; rouses us that we may well; strengthen us that we may bring about the good which we desire. From His riches our tears (of sorrow for sin) spring, our minds no compunction, our sins are confessed."

Saint Peter Damien ends this passage with this reminder of the importance of the work of the Spirit in our lives: "As the soul is the life of the body, so the Holy Spirit is the life of our souls. And as the body collapses if the soul departs, so, if the life-giving Spirit leaves our souls, they, too must die." He is speaking, of course, of the life of God in the immortal soul. A "dead" soul is unable to live the life of heaven. Thus is stressed the need for the Spirit in our lives here and now. Pray often, and mean it sincerely especially during this pandemic: "Come Holy Spirit".

In Christ Jesus Our Lord,  
Reverend Msgr. Edward C. Puleo