

DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

RECEIVING A BLESSING

by the Rev. Ormond de C. Odhner

What is a blessing? What good does it do? Who has the right to bless someone in the name of the Lord? What really is a Divine blessing? What sort of thing can be blessed?

The Writings tell us that the work the Lord does to save us and lead us into heaven is what is meant by the Holy Spirit, the third essential of the Divine Trinity; and since the Lord does this work primarily through, or by means of, His Divine Truth, the Writings also say that by the Holy Spirit is meant the Divine Truth, the truth the Lord teaches—not truth as an object of sight and thought, but truth at work within us to deliver us from our sins and to lead us into heaven.

Further concerning the Holy Spirit, the Writings say that the Holy Spirit passes through the heavens to people, and then through them to others, and that within the church it passes especially through the clergy (the ministry) to the laity. Now, that's going to sound like just a lot of words, unless you stop to think about it. The Holy Spirit passes through the heavens to people. Sure: it's through, or by means of, the heavens that the Lord inspires us with a genuine understanding of His truths and a desire to obey them. That should be clear.

But, the Holy Spirit passes through some people to others? And in the church, especially through the clergy to the laity? Well, the Lord has already done a great deal of work in you as an individual to lead you to heaven; and that work, remember, is what is meant by the Holy Spirit. You never saw the Lord doing this work, of course, but He did it. How? Through your parents, your mother, your father; through your teachers and even through your friends; and especially through the ministers of the church. Through those people you've already learned a lot about what the Lord teaches, and you've already been inspired (more often than you realize) to want to obey His teachings. That's the Holy Spirit at work in you.

But there's another way, almost exclusively the work of the clergy, through which you receive the Holy Spirit, and that's through the ministry of blessing. (There's nothing wrong at all, of course, in a father invoking the blessing of the Lord upon his family and himself.)

We're taught that there is really only one Divine blessing, both with angels and with people, and that blessing is to be given a love of the truth that the Lord teaches. That's why it is only human beings that can properly be blessed. But this love of the truth is the one and only thing that is ever going to get you to heaven. That's why it's an eternal blessing and, in comparison with it, all the pleasures of this world are of little value. Even your marriage will give you no eternal joy unless the love of the Lord's truth is what guides you in your marriage.

Now, of course, no minister can force that blessing upon you. He can't make you love the Lord's truth. No one can do that but you yourself, in cooperation with the Lord. But if you will humble yourselves before the Lord's Word, vowing and trying to obey it, even when times are rough, then, when you bow your heads as the minister raises his hands to pronounce the benediction, as it were touching the heads of all the congregation, then that blessing from the Lord is more fully established in your hearts.