

Meditations: Solemnity of Pentecost

Reflections for the Solemnity of Pentecost. The topics are: the Holy Spirit initiates and spurs forward our mission; the Paraclete grants us the gift of forgiveness; God's life and strength are given to us by the Holy Spirit.

ON THE FEAST of Pentecost we could say that Jesus' mission on earth ends and ours begins, encouraged, impelled and sustained by his same Spirit. We receive his same mission, entrusted by the Father to his Son.

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (*Jn 20:21*). We are filled with gratitude for such a great gift and want the fire that burned in Christ’s heart, and that he longed to see enkindled on earth, to burn in our hearts too. We want the “tongues of fire” that appeared over the heads of the apostles, and that are present in our souls, to spread to the furthest corner of the world.

We are not alone in carrying out this mission; we have the unsurpassable help Jesus promised us when he said he would not leave us orphans (*cf. Jn 14:18*). “Wherever the Spirit of God enters he puts fear to flight; he makes us know and feel that we are in the hands of Omnipotent Love: whatever happens, his infinite love never abandons us. This is shown by the witness of the martyrs, the courage of confessors of the faith, the undaunted zeal of missionaries, the

frankness of preachers, the example of all the saints, even some who were adolescents and children. It is shown by the very existence of the Church which, despite the limitations and sins of men and women, continues to cross the ocean of history, impelled by the breath of God and animated by his purifying fire.”[1]

At times we may feel like we are orphans, but we don’t want this feeling to paralyze us. We know that it is part of the weeds that the devil is trying to sow among the good wheat of God’s Love. When this feeling tries to enter our heart, we shouldn’t make a pact with it. Rather it should spur us to consider once again, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that we are God’s beloved children. And with Saint Josemaría we want to enter into the endless stream of divine grace: “Glory, for me, is love; it is Jesus, and with him, the Father – my Father – and the Holy Spirit – my

Sanctifier.”[2] In the love the Holy Trinity pours into our heart we find the solution for all our fears and worries.

THE FIRST TIME we tried to walk on our own, perhaps from our mother’s arms to our father’s, we didn’t know how it would end, since we had never done it before. But when we received the embrace of both of them as a reward for our success, we realized that taking risks was worthwhile. We can ask the Holy Spirit now to enkindle our will and fill our heart with the divine desire to sow peace and joy in the world.

It is in prayer that we hear God’s voice and receive the strength to launch out on this divine adventure. “Prayer is a gift that we freely receive; dialoguing with him in the Holy Spirit, who prays in us and allows us to address God, calling him Father, Daddy, *Abba* (cf. Rom 8:15;

Gal 4:4). And this is not merely an expression but a reality: we truly are children of God. ‘All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God’ (*Rom 8:14*).’^[3]

Sometimes we may be tempted, perhaps unconsciously, to think that God has distanced himself from us because of our sins or betrayals. But he always surprises us by his reaction to our fragility. “When the risen Jesus first appears to his disciples, he says to them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them’ (*Jn 20:22-23*). Jesus does not condemn them for having denied and abandoned him during his passion, but instead grants them the spirit of forgiveness. The Spirit is the first gift of the risen Lord, and is given above all for the forgiveness of sins. Here we see the beginning of the Church, the glue that holds us together, the cement that binds the bricks of the

house: *forgiveness*. Because *forgiveness* is gift to the highest degree; it is the greatest love of all. It preserves unity despite everything, prevents collapse, and consolidates and strengthens. *forgiveness* sets our hearts free and enables us to start afresh. *forgiveness* gives hope; without *forgiveness*, the Church is not built up.”[4]

THE HOLY SPIRIT wants to fill us with his strength so that we can enjoy carrying out the mission entrusted to us. Saint Josemaría shows us how harmful it can be not to have the solid foundation of divine grace: “The attack on faith tears down the spiritual edifice. The temptation against hope undermines one’s peace. But this perverse “certitude” that God doesn’t love me and that I don’t love him is what destroys and, even physiologically, leaves the heart empty.”[5]

Fortunately, the solution is within everyone's reach: "Today, then, let us learn what to do when we are in need of a real change. And who among us does not need a change? Particularly when we are downcast, wearied by life's burdens, oppressed by our own weakness, at those times when it is hard to keep going and loving seems impossible. In those moments, we need a powerful 'jolt': the Holy Spirit, the power of God. In the Creed we profess that he is the 'giver of life.' How good it would be for us each day to feel this jolt of life! To say when we wake up each morning: 'Come, Holy Spirit, come into my heart, come into my day.'"^[6]

Saint Therese of Lisieux said regarding the day of her Confirmation: "What joy I felt in my soul! Like the apostles, I awaited joyfully for the visit of the Holy Spirit ... I didn't feel the mighty wind of the first Pentecost, but rather the

gentle breeze which the prophet Elias heard on Mount Horeb. On that day I received the gift of fortitude in suffering – a gift I needed sorely, for the martyrdom of my soul was soon to begin.”^[7] We too want to be attentive to the inspirations of the Comforter of our soul.

“‘I will not leave you orphans.’ Today, on the feast of Pentecost, Jesus’ words remind us also of the maternal presence of Mary in the Upper Room. The Mother of Jesus is with the community of disciples gathered in prayer: she is the living remembrance of the Son and the living invocation of the Holy Spirit. She is the Mother of the Church. We entrust to her intercession, in a particular way, all Christians, families and communities that at this moment are most in need of the Spirit, the Paraclete, the Defender and Comforter, the Spirit of truth, freedom and peace.”^[8]

[1] Benedict XVI, Homily, 31 May 2009.

[2] Saint Josemaría, Intimate Notes, nos. 1653-1655.

[3] Francis, Homily, 8 June 2014.

[4] Francis, Homily, 4 June 2017.

[5] Notes written in the margin of the book *About the Holy Spirit* by Francisca Javiera del Valle.

[6] Francis, Homily, 20 May 2018.

[7] Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, *Manuscript A*, ch. IV, 36.

[8] Francis, Homily, 15 May 2016.

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