

Meditations: Monday of the Seventh Week of Easter

Some reflections that can guide our prayer as we prepare for the great feast of Pentecost.

- The disciples receive the Holy Spirit
- Peace in the midst of tribulation
- Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit

WHEN SAINT PAUL arrived at Ephesus, *he found some disciples. And he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'* (Acts 19:1-2). It is striking that the first question the apostle asks these gentiles is about their knowledge of

the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. This shows the importance that the Holy Spirit had in the early Church and still continues to have. *And they said, 'No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.'* *And he said, 'Into what then were you baptised?' They said, 'Into John's baptism'* (vv. 2-3).

Saint Paul wanted those embracing the faith to know in depth what living in God means. Here he makes clear to them that *'John baptised with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.'* *On hearing this these gentiles were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus* (vv. 4-5). In this scene we see a community of people who, as well as receiving Baptism, receive Confirmation in the faith, with the gift of the Paraclete. *And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they*

spoke with tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve of them in all (vv. 6-7).

In the Sacrament of Confirmation we too receive the Holy Spirit in order to “commit ourselves more fully to the Church’s battle against sin ... to work with deep faith and abiding charity, and help bring to the world the fruits of reconciliation and peace.”^[1] In our path of preparation for the great feast of Pentecost, we can ask ourselves: “What place does the Holy Spirit have in my life? Do I truly listen to Him? Do I ask Him for inspiration before taking a decision or before saying or doing anything? Do I ask Him to guide me along the path I should choose in my life, and also in my daily schedule? Do I ask Him to give me the grace to distinguish what is good and what is less good? Let us ask for the grace to learn the language of the Holy Spirit so as to listen to Him.”^[2]

IN THE GOSPEL of today's Mass, we read words from Jesus' farewell discourse at the Last Supper. Our Lord wants to prepare his disciples for what will take place in a few hours. After the allegory of the vine and the branches, the Master promises to send the Holy Spirit to them. *His disciples said, 'Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God.'* Jesus answered them, *'Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone'* (Jn 16:29-32).

“Difficulties and tribulations are part of the work of evangelisation and we are called to find in them the opportunity to test the authenticity of our faith and of our relationship with Jesus. We must consider these difficulties as the opportunity to be

even more missionary and to grow in trust towards God, our Father who does not abandon his children amid the storm.”^[3] Jesus shows his disciples that He knows what is going to happen. He knows the suffering in store for Him and assures them that, in spite of everything, He will continue assisting them so that their faith will not fail. Christ trusts in the Father’s love; this will be his consolation and that of his disciples in the future: *I am not alone, for the Father is with me (Jn 16:32)*.

After the Resurrection, the apostles would remember these words like a balm, as they realised that the rest of the discourse had already come true. Our Lord hadn’t promised his disciples a life without worries or problems. He had presented their apostolic mission in realistic terms. But He also gave them the key to overcoming every anxiety: *In the world you have tribulation; but be of*

good cheer, I have overcome the world (Jn 16:33). The life of a Christian on earth entails a constant interior struggle and the effort to make God our mainstay, placing our joy and peace in his hands. “My joy and my peace. I will never have real happiness if I don’t have peace. And what is peace? Peace is something closely related to war. Peace is a consequence of victory. Peace demands of me a constant struggle. Without struggle I will never have peace.”^[4]

I HAVE SAID THIS to you, that you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (Jn 16:33). We can ask our Lord to grant and increase in us the virtue of patience. A fruit of the Holy Spirit, patience “is the gift of understanding that important things take time, that change is organic, that there are limits and that we have to work

within them, while at the same time keeping our eyes on the horizon, as Jesus did.”^[5] Patience helps us “to withstand trials, difficulties, temptations, and our own wretchedness;”^[6] it helps us to sustain our hope in our personal struggle, despite our weaknesses. As Saint Josemaría said: “To win the battles of the soul, the best strategy often is to bide one’s time and apply the suitable remedy with patience and perseverance. Make more acts of hope. Let me remind you that your interior life will suffer defeats and you will have ups and downs – may God make them imperceptible – because no one is free of these misfortunes. But our all-powerful and merciful Lord has granted us the required means in order to conquer.”^[7]

Faced with external difficulties or setbacks that can arise in our dealings with others, it will be

helpful to remember Jesus' advice: *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart* (Mt 11:29). If we enter into this school, we will learn to “see things with patience. They are not as we would like, but as they come from God’s providence. We have to receive them with joy, whatever they are. If we see God behind everything, we will always be happy, always serene, And thus we will show that our life is contemplative, and never become anxious or lose our temper.”^[8] It is true that “at times we can feel impatience surging up: unexpected interruptions in our work, being kept waiting, the small or big setbacks of daily life. We should remember, and tell our Lord right away: ‘You have had more patience with me, Jesus!’ Impatience, beyond an instinctive reaction, is a lack of interior mortification and, at its root, a lack of charity. In contrast, understanding, forgiveness and

peace are the outcome of real affection for God and other people. At the first stirring of impatience, we should strive to smile and pray for the person who is interrupting us, keeping us waiting, or tiring us at a given moment, and offer it up to our Lord cheerfully. Jesus, with your grace; my Mother, with your help!”^[9]

^[1] John Paul II, Homily, 30 May 1982

^[2] Francis, Homily, 29 May 2017.

^[3] Francis, Angelus, 25 June 2017.

^[4] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 308.

^[5] Pope Francis, *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*, Simon & Schuster.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *The Collected Letters*, Vol. 1 Letter 2, no. 47.

^[7] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 219.

[8] Saint Josemaría, Notes from a family gathering, 6 July 1967.

[9] Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz, *In the Light of the Gospel*, Kindle edition, no. 74, p.83.

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