

Pentecost Sunday B2018

All the readings of this solemnity of Pentecost talk about the coming of the Holy Spirit. They show his role in the life of the first disciples and that of the early Church. They invite us to live by the Holy Spirit and to be guided by him in our actions.

The first reading of the Acts of the Apostles describes the event of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the first community of the disciples. It shows how on that day as the disciples were gathered in one place, a strong driving wind invaded the house in which they were and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

It shows also how they came to proclaim the marvels of God in different languages to the astonishment of the large crowd of people from all over the nations of the earth who were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast.

What is behind this text is the idea that the Holy Spirit is God's power that transforms God's people and leads them to give witness to the truth of the Gospel. Another idea is the truth that the Holy Spirit is the agent of the unification of people and in him the various differences that divide them disappear.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to the disciples. First of all, the Gospel says that, when the Holy Spirit will come, he will testify in favor of Jesus and allow the disciples to testify, too.

It says also that the Holy Spirit will guide the disciples to the whole truth because what he will say is what he hears from Jesus. The Gospel ends with Jesus' assurance to the disciples that what is his, belongs to the Father and what the Holy Spirit will say will come from both the Father and him.

What do we learn from today's feast? Today I want to talk about the role of the Holy Spirit. But, in order to better understand this role, we need, first of all, to know the identity of the Holy Spirit. In fact, who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity. As such, the Holy Spirit is God and lives in unity with the Father and the Son. He is consubstantial with the Father and the Son, that is, he has the same nature with the Father and the Son. Though he is distinct from the Father and the son, the Holy Spirit, however, is inseparable from them, both in the inner life of the Trinity and in his gifts of love to the world.

Unlike the Son who is begotten from the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, as from a single principle. Procession is understood here as a close relationship within the divine persons which links one to another as its principle origin.

After this clarification on the identity of the Holy Spirit, let us talk about his role. According to today's Gospel, the role of the Holy Spirit is twofold: First, he guides the Church as well as each one of us to the whole truth of Jesus Christ. By doing so, he glorifies Jesus and the Father, because what he says is from both the Father and the Son.

In that sense, the Holy Spirit helps us guard the deposit of faith intact; he prevents the Church from teaching error by remaining faithful to Jesus; he gives council to the Church and gifts to the people of God. Finally, the Holy Spirit enables the Church to interpret the true sense of the Scriptures and provides inspiration to the people of God so that they proclaim the Good News of Jesus in all its sound.

Second, the Holy Spirit is the advocate of the Church and of the people of God. In the common language, an advocate is one that pleads the cause of another before a tribunal or in a judicial court.

In modern terms, a person who plays the role of Advocate is called a Lawyer. In that sense, it means that the Holy Spirit is our Lawyer. The role of a Lawyer, indeed, is that of defending the client so that he might be acquitted in case someone has a problem before the court. He has to find the extenuating circumstances that can allow the judge to acquit the accused or to lessen his or her guilt. He has to argue in favor of his client and convince the jury that he deserves better treatment in the matter under examination.

In that perspective, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is our defender. Human experience, however, has taught us that it is one thing to have a Lawyer and another is to have a good one. In the Holy Spirit, we have both a Lawyer and a good one. That is why where the Spirit of Christ is, there things are certain. It is, then, the Holy Spirit who helps us bear witness to Jesus before the world and others. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot stand and talk about Jesus.

All that explains why at the beginning of the Church while the disciples were persecuted for the sake of Jesus, they did not deny their faith in him, but rather stood firm and continued to talk about Jesus. The strength to do so and the courage to carry out their duty in spite of persecution did not come from them, but rather from the power of the Holy Spirit.

If the Holy Spirit is our lawyer, then, we have to listen to him and his insights. It happens very often in civil society that the Lawyer imposes a line of conduct on a client in order to allow his case to be successful. In the same way, the building up of our relationship with Jesus depends also on how we follow the directives of the Holy Spirit.

Anytime an interior voice warns us about things we undertake by telling us that they are not in the line of God's commandments, it is the Holy Spirit who speaks to our heart. As it happens very often, we can dismiss such thoughts as ridiculous as well as we can follow them. But, we have always to remember that it is the Holy Spirit who knocks at the door of our heart, begging us not to turn our back from Jesus and his teachings.

Let us ask God to help us revive the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us so that we always please him in our life. God bless you all!

Acts 2: 1-11; Galatians 5: 16-25; John 20: 19-23

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