



VATICAN - AVE MARIA by Mgr Luciano Alimandi - The transforming power of the Holy Spirit

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The Solemnity of Pentecost brings the Easter Season to a close and the Liturgy leads us back to Ordinary Time. However the change from Pentecost to Ordinary Time would seem somewhat brusque in the sense that after such an important feast dedicated to the Holy Spirit, we immediately find ourselves in "ordinary" time. Many express the desire to "restore" in the Church's liturgical calendar, the Octave of Pentecost to give everyone an opportunity to live in a more prolonged way the great celebration of the effusion of the Holy Spirit, of which there is such great need.

However each day should be a time for invoking, adoring and searching for the Spirit, as the most precious Good, since the Holy Spirit is divine Love itself! No day could exist without Love. No prayer could exist without the Spirit? As St Paul says "nobody is able to say, 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor 12, 3). What good deed, performed in the name of God, could exist without the power of the Holy Spirit? Not one, otherwise it would be a deed of man, not of God.

The Holy Spirit is like the air we breathe: we cannot see Him but He is everywhere and without Him we cannot live. The Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity is the life and light of our souls. The "soul's sweet guest", the "sweetest consolation", so hidden that it escapes the superficial eye. To find Him we must delve deep into our hearts, because He lives "in" us; He is the true interior Master, the spiritual Guide of the soul, "the soul of our soul"! To find ourselves we need to find Him and to find Him we must pray.

In an ever more frenetic world, where man projects himself outside of self, identifying with appearance rather than with the innermost part of his being, the Holy Spirit is often undervalued even by believers in Christ, if they follow activism, materialism, hedonism, relativism. To counter the stressing pace of life today which multiplies the things to be done, it is absolutely necessary to introduce rhythms of prayer, spaces open to the breath of the Spirit in daily life: to find in Him, rest, consolation and inspiration, to love and be strengthened, to forgive and be truly free. In every season we can invoke the Holy Spirit to come upon us, on our work, on difficult situations, on peoples and cities, individuals and communities... We can always turn to Him and, as Jesus promised, we will never be disappointed: "So I say to you: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened

... If you then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lk 11, 9).

The transforming power of the Holy Spirit is wondrous. We see it clearly in the lives of the Apostles. Before meeting the Lord they were just like everyone else but after Pentecost they became the pillars of the Church: intrepid men of God, in love with the Lord Jesus, willing to give their life for love of His Name!

Saint Cyril Alexandria, in his "Comment on the Gospel of John", describes, with extraordinary eloquence, the Holy Spirit's power to renew those who welcome Him into their hearts through faith: "It is easy to prove from the Old and the New Testament that the Spirit changes the character of those among whom he comes to dwell and transforms their life. The holy man Samuel, when speaking to Saul, said: "The Spirit of the Lord will mightily come upon you, and you will be turned into another man (cfr. 1 Sam 10, 6). Saint Paul said: We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same likeness from one degree of glory to another; and this comes from the Lord, the Spirit; for the Lord is the Spirit. (cfr. 2 Cor 3, 17-18). You can see then that the Spirit recreates, so to speak, in a new pattern those among whom he is seen to dwell. He steadily replaces their desire to think earthly thoughts, with the desire to fix their gaze only on the things of heaven; he changes their unmanly cowardice into spirit of courage" (cfr. second reading of the Office of Readings for Thursday 7th Week of Easter).

We too, if we believe and if we make room for the power of the Spirit in our life, will experience as time passes, this change of which Saint Cyril speaks, with which we will become new persons. Let us look with prayerful confidence to the “Bride of the Holy Spirit ” and join the Holy Father in prayer: “let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to obtain today a new Pentecost for the Church, to fill everyone, young people especially, with the joy of living and witnessing the Gospel” (Benedict XVI, Regina Caeli 11 May 2008). (Agenzia Fides 14/5/2008; righe 56, parole 825)