

COME, O HOLY SPIRIT

On the Pentecost Day, the Spirit descended on the apostles. The Pentecost has been an agricultural feast of the Jews. It is celebrated fifty days after the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. It marks the end of the grain harvest. Being one of the great three feasts of the Jews, it attracts a lot of pilgrims to Jerusalem both Jews in Diaspora and visitors as well. The choice of God to choose this day as the day to send down his gift to his friends is very significant. The story of the miracle of speaking and hearing and the wondrous person of Christ will be taken to the far ends of the earth from where these pilgrims had come from. It means giving the story another life beyond the precincts of Jerusalem. Yet, this is not all. It actually manifests the power behind the message and the universal dimension and presence of the Spirit in every language and nation.

The same God who sent in confusion on the people because of the Tower of Babel sends the Spirit to gather together the people into one body in unity. The morality of the confusion in the Tower of Babel is in the assertion of a divine design in our lives. Is it not possible that if men and women were left to their own caprices, they would desire and experiment on virtually everything? And since there was still the need to have a beacon of truth from which values may be assessed, it was not proper for humankind to be allowed to experiment on what would rather not give glory to God. Such experiments may increase in pride and arrogance and defiance of divinely esteemed values. The pathway to unity needs be both homocentric and theophanic and not egocentric. It is when we acknowledge God and when we submit to his will that we give him his due glory. In fact, the Tower of Babel shows us that God has the power to create and re-create according to his divine will.

The creating and renewing power of God in the Spirit is a dynamism that is so indispensable in a world that is transforming from age to age. The entire creation groans towards an adoption and redemption. This is the hope that leads us to endurance. The phenomenon is the molding of the person to become what God designs for him or her. As such, we need the Spirit to give us added strength in the weakness that is ontological. The Spirit supplies in our lack and keeps leading us to the truth.

However, this Spirit is given to those who believe. Jesus was clear on this. The Spirit was to be given to his disciples by his Father in his name as an Advocate and the Spirit of truth. The Spirit consecrates the disciples in the truth to enable them face the world that often stumbles on the truth and does not know the Father. As much as Jesus does not belong to the world so also, his disciples do not belong to the world though, they are in the world. After the resurrection, it was only to his disciples that Jesus revealed himself and commissioned them to go and bear fruits. Thus, from these people who believed that the “rivers of living water will flow from.” Then, when it did flow on the Pentecost Day, new things began to happen.

The new things that happened on the Day of Pentecost was actually transforming. There was a transformation among the speakers and the hearers. The timid apostles became courageous; from the walls of an enclosure to the streets of epiphany; from the ignorance of the scriptures to an unprecedented mastery; from the fear of conspiracy among their fellow Jews to an unbridled welcome embrace to their persecution. These disciples started to share their story and they proclaimed Jesus as the Lord. The gift of tongue on this day manifested the “universal power and presence of the Spirit.” The Spirit could permeate all persons and tongues. It used every available language to proclaim the power and mercy of God. On this day, it reversed the fragmentation and the confusion of the Tower of Babel and gives unity a new meaning that seeks God and not human aggrandizement. On this day, the Spirit pulls together all the races into the reign of God.

The Spirit continues to work in the Church to form one body of Christ from the diversity of peoples and nations. Paul recognizes the different parts of the human body as a parallel metaphor to the one body of Christ. In the church, there are different spiritual gifts, ministries and works coming from the same Spirit by the same Lord for the same God. This “body metaphor” expresses a unity in diversity and encourages the sense of complementarity and the grace of interdependence of every ministry in the church. It is within this body of faith that our differences complement us rather than divide us. It is from this overwhelming character that believers can reach out into the world and reduce and remove the tensions of segregation characterized by gender, color, race or social stratification with the power of the Spirit working in each one of us. The Spirit then renews the face of the earth.

The greatest act of renewal is in the reconciliation of persons to God. Thus, the greatest gift the church receives from Christ is the power and the authority to forgive and to retain sins, to bind and to loose. This signifies complete power and authority in our relationship with each other and with God. This was the primary mission of Christ for which he gave up his life on the cross. The need for the forgiveness of sins is so much that it was the first gift on Christ’s first visit after his resurrection in the evening of the first day of the week. Significantly a new hope is given to a new dawn. This new day marks the beginning of a renewed people of God and a continuation of the mission of Jesus.

The prayer, “Come, O Holy Spirit”, is an invitation for the Spirit to fill the hearts of the faithful and to renew the face of the earth. When we wonder on how the Spirit really works in the face of all these wars, conflicts and violence and segregations that still divide us in our world today, let us understand that the transformation works on our disposition and the process of renewal is still an on-going dynamic. Yes! The Spirit works in all those who believe and who seek the face of the Lord. When we receive the gifts of the Spirit, we are challenged to become the agents of new and positive things.

~Fr. Martin-Edward Ohajunwa