



The Paraclete

Sermons from the Far East



A few months before the end of high school, I began to play truant. Instead of going for classes, I was wandering around my town and then wrote my own absence notes. One of my teachers noticed it and requested that my mom come to the school. When, she came out of the meeting, she was shaken. "I vouched for you", she said, "so you better start showing up for the classes". Later, I learned that the teacher planned to exclude me from the high school matriculation exams, which would close the door to higher education. My mother acted as a paraclete in my case, pleading my cause before the teacher.

Another Paraclete

The word "paraclete" means "called to aid". In the New Testament, it is used only five times. The first letter of John says: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have a paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). Jesus pleads our cause before the Father. He lives forever and, at the right hand of the Father, intercedes for us (see Rom 8:34). Thus, he is the first Paraclete. Yet, there is another one.

The Gospel of John contains this promise: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth" (John 14:15-16). This Paraclete prays in us and for us. "For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints accord-

The Gospel

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

(John 15:26-27;16:12-15)



Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

ing to the will of God” (Rom 8:26-27). He reminds us what Jesus taught us. “But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26). He also enables us to confess that only Jesus is the Lord (see 1 Cor 12:3).

This other Paraclete is so important that Jesus says: “it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (John 16:7). I wish we could see his importance in our lives. We ask God for money, work, house, spouse, child, and many other things. Yet, when was the last time that we asked God for the Holy Spirit? The lack of such prayer proves how little we value the mighty Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit in Action

Stalin, at the peak of his power, proudly asked: “How many military divisions does the Pope have?” The Russian empire extended its territory from the Pacific to Eastern Europe and its influence was felt all over the world. Then, on June 2, 1979, Pope John Paul II, in the Polish capital, Warsaw, uttered this simple, yet mighty prayer: “Let your Spirit descend, and renew the face of the earth, the face of this land”. Ten years later, the mighty Russian Empire was just but a history.

The book of the prophet Zechariah contains this powerful statement: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts” (Zech 4:6). It was a message to the Jewish community that returned from the Babylonian exile to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the city and the Temple. Although small and powerless, they had the mighty God on their side. These words assure us of God’s help that is more powerful than all sorts of obstacles. We are also small and powerless, yet we succeed by means of spiritual gifts conferred upon us by the Lord.

Paul mentions some of these gifts: a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working powerful deeds, prophecy, discern-

ment of spirits, various kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:8-11), the gifts of chastity and marriage (1 Cor 7:7), service, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, acts of mercy (Rom 12:7-8). All these gifts have one purpose: “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). Nobody has all the gifts. God wants us to collaborate. When we use all of them our Church grows in faith and the knowledge of Christ. However, the greatest gift among all of them is that love that moved Jesus to sacrifice his life for us. Paul speaks about this love as the way of excellence (1 Cor 12:31). There is nothing wrong with desiring spiritual gifts. But if our hearts do not burn with love for God, the body of Christ, and those who still do not know Jesus, then we better start begging God for the Paraclete to kindle our hearts with love.

Conclusion

It was not without reason, that Jesus on the day of His Ascension, ordered His disciples to wait for the coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:4-8). Without the Paraclete all our efforts are pointless, without His guidance our mission will not succeed. It is time that we realize His vital importance in our spiritual life and mission. He was the driving agent behind Jesus’ ministry and He also empowered and guided the evangelising task of the early Church. Today, We need Him more than ever. Let us pray:

*Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth,
transform our life and give us freedom from fear and
sin.
Amen.*

May God bless us always