

6. June 2020

“Comfort in suffering and death”
Retreat of Pentecost
Part 6

The name Comforter for the Holy Spirit becomes very meaningful, because it is precisely in times of such tribulation through suffering that the Holy Spirit is present. There is a time of weeping and mourning (*cf. Eccl 3,4*). This is part of our life and if this were to be completely absent in some people, then we think that they have no heart. Jesus himself wept because of the death of Lazarus (*cf. Jn 11,35*), he especially wept for Jerusalem because the hour of his gracious coming was not recognized (*cf. Lk 19,41*), Rachel weeps for her children who were killed (*cf. Jer 31,15*), etc.

Weeping, suffering and death are areas that belong to our earthly life. But we know in faith that all this will be different in eternity. Therefore the Holy Spirit, "the witness of eternity" can comfort us in these areas. The weeping and mourning will not always be and can become a sharing in the redeeming suffering of the Lord, death transforms into a return to God.

The Holy Spirit not only reminds us of this truth of faith, but his presence is a life-giving reality. In contact with him, the grief of the heart transforms into hope and tames the tendency to abandon oneself to a disorderly and therefore devouring grief, which knows no hope, which becomes very dark and can even turn into despair.

Suffering, which can also devour and make man bitter, is wrested from futility by the presence of the Holy Spirit, by awakening faith. It is then faith that unites us with the suffering of Jesus, which the Holy Spirit reminds us of and makes us aware of.

Death, the last and great enemy of man, was disempowered by the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord. "*Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?*" (*1Cor 15,55*). says the Easter Message. In the light of the Holy Spirit, death becomes a doorway into the dwellings the Lord has prepared for us (*cf. Jn 14,2*). The horror of death is diminished or disappears completely. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, love can be awakened in such a way that we look forward to the hour of our going home to God, to finally be and remain with Him forever.

The "Witness of Eternity" can bring all this about in us and thus penetrate the great tribulations of our lives with His light!

Let us shortly look at the suffering, which is also a great challenge for those who follow the Lord.

Excursus: light and dark suffering

It is immensely important that all suffering comes under the dominion of God and that it is accepted in depth with His help. If this does not happen, the impulses connected with suffering easily fall under a dark influence. It then becomes a "dark suffering" because it does not come into contact with God from within.

In contrast to this is "bright suffering", which is accepted from the hand of God. This remains a suffering, but is touched by God and integrated into the dimension of redemption. The expression of the human being is transformed accordingly. If he can beforehand become accusing and dull and possibly even rebellious, and if under the influence of suffering all his negative sides and imperfections unfold more strongly, then under the influence of God suffering becomes a bright suffering. The behaviour of man can even show special virtues and bring forth fruits of the spirit, such as patience, devotion to God's will etc.

What is briefly said here does not only apply to a current suffering, but also touches the suffering that might have happened a long time ago and was never really overcome. Also this suffering should be consciously brought into contact with God so that it can be transformed and become a "bright suffering".