

24. May 2021

**“The great evangeliser”
Pentecost Monday**

Acts 8:1bc.4.14–17 (reading for Whitsun Monday)

That day a bitter persecution started against the church in Jerusalem, and everyone except the apostles scattered to the country districts of Judaea and Samaria. Once they had scattered, they went from place to place preaching the good news. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, and they went down there and prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them: they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

After the meditations on the Holy Spirit, we return to the daily order. I hope that we could gain some new listeners through the publications on YouTube. Reflections of this kind - as on the preparation for Pentecost - can come again in the course of the year on various occasions. For the YouTube channel I have planned to give a spiritual talk every month if possible (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-Ssrm4OVIS_Q9OFjP01log).

Today we are being told, in no uncertain terms, of severe persecutions of the young church. They have accompanied the life of the Lord, then that of the apostles and the Church throughout the ages. There may have been times of outward tranquillity, but there were struggles within, divisions, heresies, schisms and much more.

It is part of the realism of following Christ to know about these persecutions and also to reckon with them. In yesterday's last meditation on the Solemnity of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, I concluded by saying that we should follow the Holy Spirit and courageously place ourselves at the service of evangelisation. Today, the first thing that is put before us by the text is persecution.

No one wishes persecution. That is natural and the Lord also suffered from them. But God takes the inevitable persecutions into service. The believers - we hear - were scattered and then preached the word in the areas they came to because of the adverse circumstances.

This is a very important lesson, because doors opened that were previously closed. This is exactly what can happen to us today. God knows all the adverse circumstances that happen in our lives and therefore also situations of persecution as they approach us or are already present. It is essential not to be intimidated by the power of darkness, which can easily happen. Even if there should be massive restrictions on our outward possibilities of evangelisation, we have to be alert to what instructions the Holy Spirit gives us in such situations. We should never forget that prayer can always and at any time rise up to God and become fruitful for mission, which then perhaps other people can actively carry out, since we are one body in the Lord (*cf. 1 Cor 12:27*).

At present we are experiencing a worldwide crisis that touches almost all areas of life. Many are simply accepting this crisis, entrusting themselves to the measures of the governments and seeing the leaders of the Church speak and act in a similar way as the governments do!

But is this the appropriate reaction? Is the question of God's will being asked? Don't we, as believers, have to ask ourselves why God allows all this and what He wants to tell us with it?

The key to a better understanding should lie in the Holy Spirit! We should ask Him for light and advice on what to do in such a situation. He will certainly give us an answer: Just as the scattered disciples proclaimed the Word, this is also our task. Especially now people need orientation, the saving Word of God, the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Always the Holy Spirit will guide us both to deepen our own conversion and to invite people to faith. Since He is the first evangeliser, we may urge Him to prepare and equip us, and give us the right direction in this crisis.

In today's text, the apostles Peter and John were sent to the scattered believers to receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. We rightly believe that the presence of the Holy Spirit was given to us through Baptism and Confirmation. But does He really work in us, and can we understand and obey His directives?

Let us ask the two apostles to pray for us too, so that the Holy Spirit may take complete guidance in our lives and bring to life everything in us that is still "frozen". What is needed now is the courageous and powerful witness of each one of us. People need to know that God cares for them and calls them to repentance! God has certainly allowed this situation of worldwide crisis because the commandments of God are not being kept, a culture of death is spreading and a

Christianity weakened from within and secularised could no longer hold back this rebuke.

All the more so now: Not to give up and go with the general flow, but to use the time to carry out the Lord's mission in all the ways that the Holy Spirit opens to us.

For those who wish to know in more detail Brother Elijahs' view on the current crisis, we recommend reading his latest paper entitled: "The coronavirus crisis in the anti-christian context"

<http://en.elijamission.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Text-The-anticristiano-context-3.pdf>