

6. May 2024

## The efficacy of the Holy Spirit

Jn 15:26-16:4

***At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: When the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning. I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues; indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you of them.***

The Church teaches us that the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son. As today's reading suggests, His task is to remind us of what Jesus said and did; that is, to bear witness to Him.

And He does not simply remind us of Jesus' words at the level of our memory and understanding; He brings them to life. In this way the meaning of His words will be more fully revealed to us, and the Holy Spirit will enable us to understand what Jesus meant by them.

As we have already seen in the meditations on the last days, there is a direct collaboration between the Holy Spirit and the apostles. God wants to bring the witness of Jesus to the world, both through the direct action of the Holy Spirit and through those who have already been convinced by Him that Jesus is Lord and Messiah.

This Holy Spirit is now constantly present in the Church and in the personal lives of Christians. As we come to know Him better, the gift of discernment of spirits can increasingly unfold in us, so that we are able to distinguish what comes from Him, what comes from our human nature, and where there are errors and counterfeits, possibly caused by demons.

Since the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, His influence will increase our love for God and our neighbour more and more. This will also be a sign of the authenticity of our spiritual life.

The great task of the Holy Spirit in our personal lives is our inner transformation, that is, our sanctification. It is God's will that we become "another Christ": that we think, act and be like the Lord Himself. This is the work that the Holy Spirit does in us when we listen to Him and are led by Him.

We can also count on the help of the Holy Spirit when we go through tribulation for Jesus' sake. In fact, the Lord foretold the apostles that they would be cast out of the synagogues, which was a severe punishment for a Jew because it meant losing the connection with one's own people, being stripped of one's identity and becoming an outcast.

In fact, as we see in the account of later events, the Jews who had not accepted Jesus treated the apostles in this way. Everywhere they were persecuted, accused and treated as enemies of the people. Jesus expressly foretold these things to them so that when they happened the disciples would know that His words were being fulfilled and their faith in Him would be strengthened.

The most devastating part of what Jesus foretells is that those who persecute and kill His disciples will think that they are worshipping God. What happens in such cases? It could be the result of such great blindness that everything the apostles preached and did was seen from the wrong perspective. It could also be the consequence of having voluntarily closed themselves to the work of the Holy Spirit. If we listen to the words of Jesus on the cross when he cried out to the Father: *"Forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Lk 23:34), we can expect them to act out of ignorance and blindness. On the other hand, if we want to get to the bottom of the matter, we must take into account the influence of the demons. They wanted to incite people to kill Jesus and His disciples. It was they who helped to blind the Jews and keep them in that blindness.

So we see that the way the demons operate is diametrically opposed to the way the Holy Spirit operates on the disciples. While the Spirit of God leads the apostles to a deeper and deeper knowledge of the Lord, the demons prevent the Jews from knowing Him.

Applying these thoughts to our own time, we can certainly assume that the growing rejection and even hatred of the Christian faith is also the work of demons.

Perhaps we are losing sight of the fact that evil forces are at work.

If we were to take this into account, we would find ourselves even more in need of the light of the Holy Spirit, who can free man from his blindness and bring him to the true knowledge of the Son of God.