

10. May 2024

Pentecost Novena  
Day 1: “Come, Holy Spirit!”

Today, after the Feast of the Ascension, we begin the novena in preparation for the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In my reflections over the next few days, I would like to step out of the usual framework of daily meditations and contemplate some aspects and ways in which the Holy Spirit works. The aim is to get to know Him better and thus to prepare ourselves for the Solemnity of Pentecost. As a guide for these meditations I will take the Pentecost Sequence, undoubtedly one of the most beautiful prayers of the Church:

*Come, Holy Spirit, come!  
And from your celestial home  
Shed a ray of light divine!*

*Come, Father of the poor!  
Come, source of all our store!  
Come, within our bosoms shine.*

*You, of comforters the best;  
You, the soul's most welcome guest;  
Sweet refreshment here below;*

*In our labor, rest most sweet;  
Grateful coolness in the heat;  
Solace in the midst of woe.*

*O most blessed Light divine,  
May that light within us shine  
And our inmost being fill!*

*Where you are not, we have naught,  
Nothing good in deed or thought,  
Nothing free from taint and ill.*

*Heal our wounds, our strength renew;  
On our dryness pour your dew;  
Wash the stains of guilt away:*

*Bend the stubborn heart and will;  
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;  
Guide the steps that go astray.*

*On the faithful, who adore  
And confess you, evermore  
In your sevenfold gift descend;*

*Give them virtue's sure reward;  
Give them your salvation, Lord;  
Give them joys that never end.*

Jesus promised us this Spirit and sent Him to earth. He is the personification of the mutual love of the Father and the Son. The Fathers of the Church call Him "the kiss of the Father and the Son". St Bernard lovingly calls Him "the sweetest and most intimate kiss". Let us dwell for a moment on this beautiful expression.

A kiss is an expression of love, in this case divine love. The Father and the Son communicate their love to us through Him. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and by being touched by Him, we are enveloped in His tenderness, which, with His kiss, wants to awaken us and make us receptive to God's love.

The expression "the sweetest and most intimate kiss" is very appropriate, especially when we remember that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Virgin Mary to conceive Christ the Lord. We can say, then, that the conception of the Son of God was a divine embrace of love from the Holy Spirit to the Virgin Mary.

Just as the Holy Spirit filled Mary and from her the Saviour was born, so the Lord wants to embrace all men and women and, through this divine kiss, to call them into His presence, to assure them of His dwelling in their souls.

But before this is possible, the Holy Spirit must penetrate the dark night into which humanity is often plunged. In the prologue to his Gospel, St John laments: *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* (Jn 1:5).

It is the darkness of sin and ignorance that envelops people like a dark night, and it is this darkness that must be torn away! The word "rend" indicates that the darkness is dense and that a great effort is needed to enable souls to receive the light. This effort was made by the Son of God through His Passion and Death on the Cross.

The Holy Spirit now presents to us this great work of salvation of Christ and wishes to bring this gift of God to men so that they may accept it and be enlightened by it.

But the darkness is very thick, because to the darkness of sin and ignorance is added the influence of the Devil, who wants to lead people into sin and bind them in ignorance. Satan confuses and deceives souls; he wants to tarnish the image of God in them, to disfigure it or to make it disappear altogether.

All the more we need the light of the Holy Spirit, who is certainly already present and active in the world, but whom we can continue to invoke to enlighten souls. That is why, in the first verse of the Pentecost sequence, we invoke Him with these words:

*"Come, Holy Spirit, come!  
And from your celestial home  
Shed a ray of light divine!"*

The Holy Spirit is there to show us the Lord as He really is, and also to make us see how abominable and reprehensible sin is. He shows us the way of salvation and strengthens us on that way. By His death Jesus overcame sin, which hinders the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Church prays for the coming of the Holy Spirit to move her and urge her to fulfil God's will and thus continue the Lord's work of salvation.

Let us pray especially in these days for the conversion and enlightenment of souls. The Holy Spirit seeks them, and when He succeeds in touching them (perhaps also thanks

to our prayers), people will change their lives, the night of their souls will be torn away and the light will be able to inundate them.

Therefore: “*Come, Holy Spirit. [...] And shed a ray of light divine*”.