

12. May 2024

Pentecost Novena
Day 3: "The best of comforters"

*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.*

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter whom the Lord has given us. The Apostle Paul tells us: *"He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God"* (2 Cor 1:4).

This comfort that we receive from God and are called to offer to those who are troubled can extend to many areas: comfort in material need, when the Spirit moves us to share with others; comfort in the affliction of the soul, when the Spirit helps us to assist others in their difficulties, reminding them that God is with them and will never abandon them; comfort in the midst of human suffering, to witness that God is present even in the midst of pain.

But it is important that we first experience the consolation of the Holy Spirit in our own lives, noticing how He always invites us to look up to God, for it is easy to forget His comforting presence in the midst of the worries of daily life, when we feel overwhelmed by the weight of material and spiritual needs.

But when we remember the Holy Spirit, who never fails to illuminate our hearts with His warm light and to delight our senses, we realise that there is no situation that excludes His presence.

It is significant that the Pentecost Sequence refers to the Holy Spirit as the "guest of the soul". In many cultures hospitality is very important. The guest is usually given a lot of attention, listened to carefully, given the best and not offended in any way. It is precisely

this attitude of hospitality that we need to welcome such an illustrious guest as the Holy Spirit. He is the most important and His presence is the greatest joy.

That is why it is good to call upon Him again and again, to enter into dialogue with Him, to get to know Him as the true friend of the soul and to feel His influence within us. Especially when we are in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the world and feel the restlessness within us, we need to return to Him.

By consciously invoking the Holy Spirit, by asking for His help, we can put a stop to the bustle of the world and avoid being carried away by the many distractions it offers us or by the restlessness we may feel within ourselves. It is He who shows us concrete situations from God's perspective and restores inner peace.

This also applies to situations in which we become heated, when we feel our 'blood boiling', when we become inflamed in a negative way. The Spirit cools our senses like a "Grateful coolness in the heat" so that we can calmly assess the situation and deal with it appropriately. We know that in order to discern correctly we must do so with a 'cool head'.

Sometimes we may need to invoke the Holy Spirit for a long time to clear the fog around our hearts and allow His light to shine on us again. This is especially true if we still have unhealed inner wounds. Such wounds can affect us in such a way that when we are in critical situations, which a healthy person could handle with relative ease, they come upon us like an emotional storm of unresolved feelings. Healing these wounds requires a doctor of the soul: the Holy Spirit comes to our aid and is able to calm our disturbed emotions. And more: He can touch them at their deepest root, at the point of origin, and thus begin a healing process.

Indeed, suffering and death are experienced not only on the physical plane, but also on the plane of the soul. The sufferings that are most painful and can even crush a person are the ones that are often unrecognised and disregarded.

The Holy Spirit, as an intimate friend of the soul, wants to alleviate this inner suffering and offers Himself as the life-giving Spirit. There is always a danger that people will become emotionally closed in their loneliness and experience something like an inner death. The Comforter comes to relieve this suffering. Where we ourselves have been

able to overcome a problem in Him and with Him, we are also called to comfort others with the same consolation we have received.

Let us always ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten souls so that they may reach the sources of salvation and receive redemption and healing.