

19. May 2024

Solemnity of Pentecost
The Spirit orders all things

1 Cor 12:3b-7:12-13

“Bretheren: no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is the vital principle of the Church. He orders everything according to the will of God. In this way he brings man out of the chaos of his soul and spirit, leads him to forgiveness in Christ, and orders everything according to the Spirit of the Lord. At the end of today's reading, we read that all, whatever their condition or origin, have been incorporated into the Church, “to drink of one Spirit”.

Here we are shown what the purpose of the Spirit's work is: that all people may receive salvation in Christ and be accepted as members of His Body, which is the Church.

Perhaps today this goal has been lost sight of, and it is considered sufficient for the Hindu to be a good Hindu; for the Muslim to be a good Muslim; for the Jew to be a good Jew... No doubt it is desirable for each one to practise the best of his own religion as long as he does not yet know the Lord. But this should not make us forget the goal of the Holy Spirit, which is to bring everyone to the knowledge of Christ.

As the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles (2:1-11) tells us, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and on all those present. Peter proclaims the Good News, and people from different backgrounds hear him speak in their own language. It is undoubtedly a miracle of the Holy Spirit. In this moment of grace, what was lost in the confusion of tongues after the building of the Tower of Babel (cf. Gen 11:7) seems to be restored.

But even more important was the sign given on that day: the Gospel was to be taken to all peoples. This is the great work of the Holy Spirit in collaboration with the Apostles and their successors. To accomplish this task, the Church has been equipped with all that is necessary, for the Holy Spirit equips its members for the most diverse ministries. It is important to understand that the gifts are for the edification of the Church. They are not for the person who receives them, but for the service of others.

Here again the basic attitude of the Spirit is revealed: just as God serves us, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve (Mk 10:45), so the Spirit wants to serve and urges us to serve one another.

This is also a criterion to easily distinguish the Spirit of God from the spirit of the world or the demonic spirit. The spirit of the world is concerned only with itself and its own interests; the demonic spirit seeks power for its own exaltation; the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, glorifies God and serves humanity.

At the beginning of today's reading we are offered another important criterion for discerning spirits: *"No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit"*. So we see that the sign that someone really knows Jesus is that he calls Him 'Lord' and regards Him as such. Any other discourse about Jesus that does not include this fundamental understanding, however scientific it may be, lacks the supernatural dimension, the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

On this day of Pentecost, when we celebrate the wonderful descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, I invite you to pray in a special way for the enlightenment of the Jews. They are the first chosen people, and many of them are still waiting for the Messiah and imploring his coming. May the Holy Spirit give them the light to recognise Jesus as Lord and Messiah! May He enlighten the other peoples too, so that there may be one flock with one shepherd (cf. Jn 10:16), and so that what we have read today may be fulfilled:

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit".