
THE MARVELLOUS WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



During the course of the summer we are granted a few moments of respite which, I hope, are most beneficial to you. However, this summer season also allows us to let ourselves marvel at everything which God does that is good, grand, and holy in and around us. And it is with pleasure that I share with you excerpts of my Pentecost pastoral letter, written also on the occasion of the first Diocesan Eucharistic Congress preparatory to the Jubilee year 2000.

« KEEP ALIVE THE MEMORY OF THE LORD »

This injunction that we find in the Liturgy of the Hours is a permanent invitation to the Church as a whole, hence to every baptised person, to remember the attitudes, words and gestures of Jesus. However, this injunction cannot be kept without the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. This is why, in this third pastoral letter on the occasion of the feast of Pentecost - after having written on the theme of human dignity and the holiness of God, and on the importance for the Christian community to care for each one of its members - it is not without trepidation that I want to briefly recall the marvels that the Holy Spirit is working in our world; but I do so all the more willingly on this day when, through the action of the Holy Spirit, Deacon Curtis Sappier becomes the first Maliseet priest of the Lord. I also do it because of the five diocesan eucharistic congresses preparatory to the Jubilee of the year 2000. It is by referring almost exclusively to the conciliar and liturgical teachings - especially the eucharistic prayers - that I want to point out this marvellous activity of the Holy Spirit. « At the last supper as he sat at table with his disciples, he offered himself to you as the spotless lamb, the acceptable gift that gave the Father perfect praise. Christ has given us this memorial of his passion to bring us its saving power until the end of time. When the faithful receive this great sacrament, the Holy Spirit nourishes them and confirms them in holiness, so that the family of humankind might walk in the light of one faith, in one communion of love. We come then to this wonderful sacrament to become filled with grace and have a foretaste of the Kingdom. »

THE MEMORY OF THE CHURCH

It would not be possible to remember Jesus without the presence of the Holy Spirit who is there to remind us of all that Jesus said. For close to two thousand years, the Spirit of Jesus has been the memory of the Church. Had not Jesus proclaimed, « The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you. » It is still the same Spirit today who makes us remember Jesus. It is this Spirit who inspired the first Christian communities to live in the manner of the Risen One and to pass on to generations to come all that they had learned from Jesus. It is the Spirit, the gift of God, who worked in a very special way with the evangelists to pass on to us an account of the events that took place among the first disciples. It isn't for nothing that the Church acclaim Jesus as follows: « Blessed be Jesus, sent by the Father to be the friend of children and of the poor; he promised to send the Holy Spirit to be with us each day, so that we might live for him. » And he has kept his word.

« WE ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD »

« God did not want to save only individuals who had no relations with one another; rather, He wanted to make of them a people that would truly know Him and serve Him in holiness. » We bear the glorious names of holy

nation, redeemed people, chosen race, royal priesthood; we are God's people; we are charged today with proclaiming the marvels of the one who has called us to His glorious light. What took place, for things to happen this way?

A PEOPLE THAT BENEFITS FROM GOD'S MERCY

In the first letter of Peter we are told that at one time we were not a people and that we lived in darkness, that at one time we had not received mercy but that now this mercy has been granted to us. Once we were not a people, but we are one, now. We have benefited from the freely given mercy of God obtained for us through the work of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit. « Rejoice, choirs of angels! Break out in rejoicing throughout the world. Let the joy of the sons and daughters of God break out in the Church! here for all time is the one Passover, the long march to the land of freedom; in the night your people marches on, free and victorious! Here is the victory, here is freedom for all people, the risen Christ triumphs over death! » This is the remarkable reality we are now living. And referring to the prayer that follows baptism, we can assert that we are his people through baptism, we are anointed with the holy oil so that we can eternally remain members of Jesus Christ the priest, prophet, and king.

A PEOPLE THAT RECOGNIZES THE MERCY OF GOD

Those whom the Father draws to Him in His great mercy form the people of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ in which all divisions are abolished. The Spirit works among men and women so that all may be one. Enemies are being reconciled; those who are estranged join hands in friendship, and nations seek together the way of peace. We constantly recognise the mercy of our God, His faithfulness, goodness, and love that come to our aid. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's forgiveness is given in abundance to us sinners. And it is thanks to Him that we can in turn forgive our brothers and sisters. It is thanks to Him that as we are reconciled to God and our neighbours, we can offer a worthy sacrifice marked by mercy. It is now that the people of God knows a period of grace and reconciliation, when the Father allows His people in Christ to catch their breath by turning to Him and to be of service to their neighbour by surrendering all the more to the Holy Spirit.

+ François Thibodeau

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (130) (24 July 1996)