



From A Bishop's Journal (690)

Moved by the Spirit (6) "The Spirit of God is upon me"

When we look at all that the Lord accomplished during his earthly life, it is not surprising to realise how and why all these Churches sprang up throughout the world. Jesus was given a universal mission. He said that he would send his Spirit upon all his disciples, and that they in turn would do even greater things than he. At the synagogue in Nazareth he proclaimed, to the astonishment of the crowd: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favour from the Lord." Three years: that was really too short a period, to carry out such a programme; so, animated by the Holy Spirit, his disciples continued his work of liberation.

Following Jesus

The day after Pentecost the Apostles worked their first miracles "in the name of Jesus," "in the name of the Risen One": curing of the cripple, resurrection from the dead, etc.; however, the great miracle will always remain the atmosphere of peace, fellowship, and charity within these very diversified communities. Those who were considered the pariahs of their community were suddenly considered brothers. Prisoners deserving of the death penalty for running away from their masters recovered their dignity. People without hope found it in the Risen Jesus. In the midst of persecution, the Christians rediscovered the active presence of the Risen One.

Following the Compassionate Jesus

Throughout his life Jesus constantly showed compassion to the poor. He declared that he had not come for the healthy but for the sick. He had loudly proclaimed: "Go and learn about the meaning of mercy," and in a discourse reported by Matthew, he declared that whatever we do to the least among the people, we do to him... "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was sick, I was naked, I was a stranger... and you came to me. Come, you blessed of the Father." It is not surprising, then, that moved by the Holy Spirit, Christians found innovative ways to prolong Jesus' charitable actions. Religious orders were founded for the liberation of prisoners and the care of the sick.

Marked by Charity and Justice

In our own country and in numerous other countries, many organisations were founded. They were marked by concern for justice and charity. We recall Marguerite d'Youville, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. John Eudes who founded a congregation to help women in difficulty. Closer to home we have the Canadian Catholic Organisation Development and Peace, established in 1967 by the Canadian bishops. Also comes to mind the wonderful work of Blessed Mother Teresa who founded an institute to care for the abandoned dying, the excluded from society, and AIDS patients. Charity is a many-faceted, often novel, endeavour. Jesus must be very happy to see all these at times very daring undertakings! But wasn't he the first to set an example of daring and compassion? He opened the eyes and ears of his kinsmen so that they, in turn, would show compassion for the sufferings of their brothers and sisters. He energised them and energises them still so that they may respond generously to these calls by words and gestures of justice, solidarity, freedom, respect of the person, and fidelity to the Gospel. He brings to their words and gestures courage, tenacity despite everything, enthusiasm, and the strength of contagion.

Through the Hours and the Days

If it is good to see the energy of the Spirit in the founding of the different Churches on all the continents, if it is good to note the generosity and the diversity of the many charitable organisations, it is of the utmost importance to discern in our respective families the wonderful presence of the Spirit. If there were no love, no life could be understood or lived. Saint Paul's hymn to charity is embodied in our family lives: "Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish... Love rejoices with the truth... There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure. Love never fails." It is the Spirit who gives this love to us and our families. We must be aware of this, and be grateful. Our lives are interwoven with these bonds of love that stream from our families.

From Cradle to Grave

All the loving gestures made throughout the year, throughout the day, cannot be counted. Only the Lord knows whether or not they are charged with the divine love. So many services rendered not only during childhood but throughout life, even in sickness and old age! So many acts of forgiveness, given over time! So many fervent and sincere prayers for our loved ones and all the families! It is often in families where there is great love that are born the most beautiful initiatives on behalf of the community. The family, a school of love, shows its fruitfulness because God is love. "Where there is charity, there is God."

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