

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST



HOMILY & MESSAGE OF BISHOP ALDO BERARDI, O.S.S.T. Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia

"Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:19-23)

Christ is risen. He has received the fullness of power and love. He joined the Father with our transfigured flesh. He sends His Spirit to live the divine life now. The paschal mystery has been fulfilled before our amazed eyes: the one who was crucified is alive through his Father in the Spirit. He grants us divine forgiveness and restores us to our lost dignity. He gives more, he makes us sons and daughters of light after him. All that the Holy History has told us is fulfilled in him. All the promises are exceeded. Every man is called to share the Trinitarian life. Communion is possible. Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost are the expression of the same mystery of redemption and divinization. Even if we have to situate them in time, they go beyond time, they introduce into eternity, they express the same reality. The God-with-us of Christmas is the God-for-us of Easter. He is the God-in-us of Pentecost. We are animated by the Holy Spirit breathed into our bodies and souls. We are the Temple of this Spirit who prays and loves in us. We are the People of God, vibrating with the Words of love and witnessing to the

eternal life already present in us. The Spirit of the Father and the Son gives Himself to us in order to live by the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

The Spirit of the Father and the Son.

Beyond the limited biblical images, the Spirit is God. He is a Divine Person, like the Father and the Son. He is eternal and powerful. He is of God and comes from God. The images help us to understand his strength, his mission, his presence. Scripture is filled with his animating and living presence. Presiding over creation, it protects God's people with Abraham and the prophets. It allows the incarnation of the Son. He raises the Son. He launches the Church into adventure.

Creator Spirit: The "hustle and bustle" of the origins needed harmony and breath. The primitive chaos was organized to let life and light emerge. The Spirit hovered over the original waters and allowed life to blossom. Each time the chaos resumed, it was he who intervened. When darkness invades the world or hearts, it is he who gives light and clarity. The pillar of fire in the desert, the cloud of the mountain, the refreshing rain... the Spirit manifests itself to restore broken links, to create harmony, to give breath, to carry life.

Purifying Spirit: The return to paganism or idolatry is a permanent threat. We prefer chains and masters to freedom and responsibility. We place our hopes in murderous idols or deified ideologies. We sink into false freedoms and deadly autonomy. The Spirit comes to overthrow idols to free us, comes to enlighten our minds to disenchant them, comes to purify our souls to set them free. We see his action in the lives of prophets and saints. We recall His action in our own lives. The Spirit unites us to God and reminds us of our divine vocation. His purification gives us innocence and agility, freedom and conscience. It puts us back on the path that leads to the Father through the Son.

Sanctifying Spirit: The Spirit prepares us for the meeting. He is present in our hearts and souls. He has opened our being to encounter and love. He re-establishes the link with the Creator who reveals Himself as

Father in Jesus Christ. Could we receive divine grace without preparation, without our being 'adapted' to this happiness? Our human nature takes its full measure in adoptive sonship. Attraction is inevitable, sanctification is 'natural' because it corresponds to our expectations and to our being stretched upwards, towards the Other, towards love. The work of the Spirit is therefore to prepare us and to allow us to encounter the divine. In Jesus, this is realized to perfection: true God and true Man, he lives communion in his one Person of the Word without confusion or dissolution. He is the harmony of heaven and earth. He is man according to the will of God. Through the sacraments, we enter into this movement which will end in God, at the heart of Trinitarian communion.

Spirit of love: While the Spirit unites the Father and the Son because he is the love of the Father and the Son, he unites our person by his divine presence, he creates in us the encounter, he purifies our souls from sin and from the residues of death that persist, he sanctifies our being to unite us to God. Love, it is in God, it is in us. Love, it transforms our lives to propel them into Trinitarian love. Love is the only name of God revealed in Jesus Christ and lived in the Spirit.

The Trinitarian mission of the Spirit is unity. From the unity of the Trinity flows the unity of the Church and of our persons. The Spirit acts at the heart of our lives as he acts at the heart of the Trinity.

The Spirit, heart of the Church.

The Church is often perceived as an institution, sometimes venerable, sometimes vulnerable, sometimes execrable. It is a point of contention. Whether loved or rejected, it does not leave one indifferent. Certainly, she has not always been equal to her mission, she has made mistakes, she has compromised herself with the spirit of the world. But she is of divine origin, she lives by the Spirit, she tries to be faithful to her Lord, she bears witness to love. The Spirit takes on the task of bringing her back on the way to Heaven by way of the cross to blossom in the Resurrection. He makes her the Bride of Christ.

The Church, Body of Christ: Isn't that its most beautiful name? Beyond the necessary institutionalization, it is the mystery of communion, it is the expression of the invisible, it is the witness of truth. In her, Revelation is guarded and proclaimed. The Spirit guides it towards the fullness of truth and towards full communion in love. We are not always up to the task, but we must always rise to see with the eyes of God. United with her Lord, she enters into full Trinitarian communion with all that she is.

The Church, Temple of the Spirit: Is this not its concrete reality? The Spirit animates it and whispers to it words of love. The Spirit acts in her and prays in her. The Spirit allows the miracle and the sacraments. He keeps her alive in holiness. The "Holy Church of Sinners" is a permanent miracle of creativity, forgiveness, compassion and mercy. In humility she acknowledges her faults, but in hope she goes on her way because the Spirit dwells in her and guides her.

Love at Work

Pentecost concludes our Easter celebrations by infusing the Easter spirit into our lives and communities. The Spirit is given to live the spirit of the Risen One in daily life.

Pentecost invites us to take the Trinity as a model of life and harmony. Love alone is worthy of faith because love alone is the power of unity in the difference assumed. May the Spirit be at the heart of our lives, of our communities, of the Church. May He introduce us into the heart of the Trinity.

Happy Feast to all,

+ **Aldo BERARDI, O.SS.T.**

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