

PENTECOST – 20th May 2018

WHEN THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, COMES, HE WILL GUIDE YOU INTO ALL THE TRUTH – Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OMS

John 15,26-27; 16,12-15

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

On the day of Pentecost, while the Jewish community celebrated the gift of the laws given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai, in the Christian community there is the descent of the Spirit. This episode marks the transition from the old to the new alliance. The believers with Jesus do not obey the laws of Moses anymore, but welcome the Spirit that enables them to love like that of the Father. In today's reading the Church joins two passages from chapter 15 and 16 of John's gospel in which it tells us who this Spirit is and what is its work.

Jesus says in John's gospel chapter 15, 26, *“But when the Helper comes,”* and here there is the Greek word *“Paràclito”* translated as *“Helper”* that is not easy to understand. Who is this Helper? It is he that is called to the rescue. It has been translated also as the comforter, but not in the way of he who comes to comfort, but he who comes to eliminate the root of the cause of the suffering. Jesus had already stated in the previous chapter that he would pray for this *“...Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”* (John 14, 24). This is the guarantee for the Christian community. This Spirit does not come to help in the moment of need, but comes before and remains for always. This is the guarantee for serenity that permits the community to dedicate itself in helping others.

This Spirit is called *“... the Spirit of truth,”* and then later on, joining with verse 12 in chapter 16, Jesus states *“When the Spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all the truth...”* The truth in John's gospel is not the doctrine that one possesses, but it is a dynamic attitude of love that unites with others. For this Jesus does not state *“I am the truth”*, but *“I am in the truth”*. He does not authorize one to possess the truth, but to be in the truth and to walk in the truth. While those who have the truth can distance themselves from others, from those who do not think like them, who is in himself the truth is united to everyone, this is the guarantee of this Spirit of truth.

But then, here is the security, the certainty of what Jesus promises, he says *“...whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”* This is the guarantee of relevance and survival of the church. What does this mean? The Holy Spirit, this force of God's love, does not repeat things of the past, but announces things of the future. This means that, in the dynamics of community life, faced with new needs, old answers will never be given, answers from

the past, but the Spirit, that is the community's tension for the good of man as an absolute value, will be able to give new answers. So new needs new answers.

To conclude Jesus says *“All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”* What is the meaning of this ? It is not a new message, but an understanding of it in new circumstances. Therefore there is only one message, that which we already know, the gospels. It is the practical implementation of this message, always in favour of the good of mankind and not of the institution, of that which favours the growth of man, all this is the guarantee of growth, of survival and of actuality of the church.