



The Holy See

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GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 24 May 1989

In the previous reflection on the Holy Spirit we began with John's text of Jesus' farewell discourse. In a certain way this is the principal gospel source of pneumatology. Jesus announced the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who "proceeds from the Father" (Jn 15:26). He will be sent by the Father to the apostles and the Church in Christ's name, by virtue of the redemption effected in the sacrifice of the cross, according to the eternal plan of salvation. In the power of this sacrifice the Son also "sends" the Spirit, for he announced that the spirit will come as a consequence, and at the price of his own departure (cf. Jn 16:7). There is a connection stated by Jesus himself between his death-resurrection-ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, between the Pasch and Pentecost. Indeed, according to the fourth Gospel, the giving of the Holy Spirit took place on the very evening of Easter Sunday (cf. Jn 20:22-25). It may be said that the wound in Christ's side on the cross opened the way for the outpouring of the Spirit, which will be a sign and a fruit of the glory obtained through the passion and death.

We learn from Jesus' discourse in the upper room that he called the Holy Spirit the "Paraclete": "I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Paraclete, to be with you forever" (Jn 14:16). Similarly we read in other texts: "the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit" (cf. Jn 14:16; 15:26; 16:7). Instead of "Paraclete" many translations use the word "Counselor." That term is acceptable, though it is necessary to have recourse to the original Greek word *Parakletos* to grasp the full meaning of what Jesus says about the Holy Spirit.

Parakletos means literally, "one who is called or appealed to" (from *para-kalein*, "to call to one's assistance"). He is therefore the defender, "the advocate," as well as the "mediator" who fulfills the function of intercessor. It is this meaning of "advocate-defender" that now interests us, while not forgetting that some Fathers of the Church use *Parakletos* in the sense of "Counselor"

particularly in reference to the Holy Spirit's action in regard to the Church. For the present we shall speak of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete-Advocate-Defender. This term enables us to grasp the close relationship between Christ's action and that of the Holy Spirit, as can be seen from a further analysis of John's text.

When Jesus in the upper room, on the eve of his passion, announced the coming of the Holy Spirit, he did so in the following terms: "The Father will give you another Paraclete." These words indicate that Christ himself is the first Paraclete, and that the Holy Spirit's action will be like that of Christ and in a sense prolong it.

Jesus Christ, indeed, was the "defender" and remains such. John himself will say so in his First Letter: "If anyone does sin, we have an advocate (*parakletos*) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 Jn 2:1).

The advocate (defender) is he who, taking the part of those who are guilty because of sin committed, defends them from the penalty due to their sins, and saves them from the danger of losing eternal life and salvation. This is precisely what Jesus Christ did. The Holy Spirit is called the Paraclete because he continues Christ's redemptive work which freed us from sin and eternal death.

The Paraclete will be "another advocate-defender" also for a second reason. Remaining with Christ's disciples, he will watch over them with his omnipotent power. "I will pray the Father," Jesus said, "and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever" (Jn 14:16). "He dwells in you, and will be in you" (Jn 14:16). This promise must be taken together with the others made by Jesus when going to the Father: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). We know that Christ is the Word who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). When going to the Father he said: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). It follows that the apostles and the Church must continually find, by means of the Holy Spirit, that presence of the Word-Son which, during his earthly mission, was physical and visible in his incarnate humanity, but which, after his ascension to the Father, is completely immersed in mystery. The Holy Spirit's presence which, as Jesus said, is interior to souls and to the Church ("He dwells with you, and will be in you": Jn 14:17), will make the invisible Christ present in a lasting manner "until the end of the world." The transcendent unity of the Son and the Holy Spirit will ensure that Christ's humanity, assumed by the Word, will be present at work wherever the trinitarian plan of salvation is being put into effect through the power of the Father.

The Holy Spirit-Paraclete will be the advocate-defender of the apostles, and of all those down through the centuries in the Church who will be the heirs of their witness and apostolate. This is especially so in difficult moments when they are tested to the point of heroism. This was Jesus' prophecy and promise: "They will deliver you up to councils...you will be dragged before governors and kings.... When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to

say...for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Mt 10:17-20; likewise Mk 13:11; Lk 12:12 says: "for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that hour what you ought to say").

Even in this very practical sense the Holy Spirit is the Paraclete-Advocate. He is close and even present to the apostles when they must profess the truth, justify it and defend it. He himself then inspires them. He himself speaks through their words, and together with them and through them he bears witness to Christ and his Gospel. Before their accusers he becomes the invisible advocate of the accused, by the fact that he acts as their counselor, defender and supporter.

Especially during persecutions in all ages, those words of Jesus in the upper room are verified: "When the Paraclete comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father...he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning" (Jn 15:26-27).

The action of the Holy Spirit is that of "bearing witness." It is an interior, "immanent" action in the hearts of the disciples, who then bear witness to Christ externally. Through that immanent presence and action, the transcendent power of the truth of Christ who is the Word-Truth and Wisdom, is manifested and advances in the world. From him, through the Spirit, the apostles obtained the power to bear witness according to his promise: "I will give you a mouth of wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict" (Lk 21:15). This happened already in the case of the first martyr Stephen, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles that he was "full of the Holy Spirit" (6:5). His adversaries "could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke" (Acts 6:10). Also in the following centuries the opponents of the Christians continued to rage against the heralds of the Gospel. At times they stifled the Christians' voice in their blood, but without succeeding in suffocating the truth of which they were the messengers. That truth continued to flourish in the world through the power of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete—is he who according to the words of Christ, "will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" (Jn 16:8). Jesus' own explanation of these terms is significant: "Sin" signifies the lack of faith that Jesus met with among "his own," those of his own people who arrived at the point of condemning him to death on a cross. In speaking of "righteousness," Jesus seems to have in mind that definitive righteousness which the Father will confer upon him ("...because I go to the Father") in the resurrection and ascension into heaven. In this context "judgment" means that the Spirit of truth will demonstrate the guilt of the world in rejecting Christ, or more generally, in turning its back upon God. Because Christ did not come into the world to judge and condemn it but to save it, then in actual fact that "convincing the world of sin" on the part of the Spirit of truth must be understood as an intervention directed to the salvation of the world, to the ultimate good of humanity.

"Judgment" refers particularly to the "prince of this world," namely, Satan. From the very beginning he tried to turn the work of creation against the covenant and union of man with God: knowingly he

opposes salvation. Therefore, he "is already judged" from the beginning, as I explained in the encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* (n. 27).

If the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, is to convince the world precisely of this "judgment," undoubtedly he does so to continue Christ's work aimed at universal salvation.

We can therefore conclude that in bearing witness to Christ, the Paraclete is an assiduous (though invisible) advocate and defender of the work of salvation, and of all those engaged in this work. He is also the guarantor of the definitive triumph over sin and over the world subjected to sin, in order to free it from sin and introduce it into the way of salvation.

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