THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE ATTITUDE OF A COMFORTER

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Beloved in Christ the Lord, on this Pentecost Sunday, together with the Most Blessed Mother, together with the Apostles, we persevere in prayer, awaiting the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, the Comforter. And we cry out: *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, O Creator Spirit, come. And it seems that we hear a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming. It seems that we see the tongues of fire that descend upon the Apostles.

And when we set before our eyes the scene of the descent of the Holy Spirit, when we think about the history of the Church, about how great a power the Holy Spirit gave to the Apostles and to their successors, when we see how great the fruits were that those who professed the Catholic faith, who were strengthened by the Holy Spirit, bore over 2,000 years, then we begin to wonder what has happened, whether the Holy Spirit still acts in our times, why we so often have the impression that contemporary Catholics have lost His sevenfold gifts. They do not possess the gift of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, or fear of the Lord.

This question of ours, which may arise today, is not at all, my dear ones, so groundless and senseless. Indeed, it is hard today to discern the Holy Spirit acting among those who call themselves Catholics. And there are two reasons.

THE DEVASTATED CONFIRMATION RITE

First, my dear friends, we must realise that, since through the sacrament of Confirmation the Catholic soul, the baptised soul, is strengthened with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is strengthened in order that, as a knight, it may stand under the banner of Christ the King and fight for the true God. Since we realise that this sacrament is a source of strength, we should immediately realise how much this very sacrament is hated by the age-old enemy of human nature, the devil. The devil, who knows perfectly well, much better than a great many Catholics, what power God's grace has, what strength is granted to us through the holy sacraments. And it cannot surprise us that the devil does all he can to abolish the holy sacraments, to bring them into doubt, to bring about their invalidity.

And this is precisely what happened after the Vatican Council, and the rites of the sacrament of Confirmation were devastated. And when we carry out the analysis, I have presented it to you more than once, we see that in the case of all four elements necessary for the validity of a sacrament, matter, form, intention and minister, we have very serious doubts, doubts bordering on the conviction that this post-conciliar rite is invalid. And this would explain, my dear ones, why we do not see the action of the Holy Spirit in the contemporary world, among contemporary so-called Catholics. Why do we not see the fruits of those gifts that are imparted to the soul through the sacrament of Confirmation? Simply, for several decades Catholics have not been receiving these gifts. They are disarmed, deprived of the power of the Holy Spirit.

GIFTS AND VIRTUES

Second, my dear ones, we must take account of what Saint Thomas Aquinas reminds us of, namely, that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to us as a help for the virtues. What does this mean? That the gifts of the Holy Spirit do not replace the virtues. Virtue, that is, a stable disposition, an inclination of the soul to do good, must be worked out, formed by man. With the help of God's grace we are called to this in our Catholic life: to form in ourselves virtues, an inclination to do good. But as Saint Thomas Aquinas reminds us, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given as a help for the virtues. In other words, where a man puts

in effort, cooperates with God's grace, desires to become like our ideal, who is Christ the Lord and the Most Blessed Mother, there the Holy Spirit helps him, supports him, completes the work that man begins. But the Lord God will not replace our effort. The Lord God will complete what man has begun, what he desires.

And here, my dear ones, we realise at this moment that the mere fact of receiving the sacrament of Confirmation, or of approaching other sacraments, confession, Holy Communion, does not automatically mean that these sacraments will bring forth abundant fruit in us. Whether this happens, whether we bear fruit, what fruit we bear, depends on us, depends on how zealously we make use of the grace given to us through the sacrament. And with horror one must state, when we look at the whole history of the Church, that a great mass of Catholics, both lay and clerical, despised God's grace, did not cooperate with God's grace, trampled underfoot the gifts that the Lord God had given.

And we must, my dear ones, first of all examine our conscience as to ourselves. How far do I cooperate with God's grace, how far do I, a soul strengthened through the sacrament of Confirmation, realise what grace I have received and what weight of responsibility rests upon me.

COMFORTERS, NOT OPPRESSORS

My dear ones, unfortunately among Catholics, also among Catholics in tradition, there is no lack of souls that are only apparently pious, only apparently Catholic. And allow me to draw your attention to the fact that the Holy Spirit is called by the Lord Jesus Himself by the name *Paraclitus*. Paraclete, a term that could mean an advocate, someone who comes to help, who guides, who supports in a difficult situation, who comforts. The Spirit, the Comforter. In the Book of Isaiah the Lord God says: "I will not break the bruised reed." The Holy Spirit comes in order to lead man to the truth, to lift man up, to strengthen man. That is the action of the Holy Spirit. Consolation and strengthening, not crushing, not humiliation, not trampling. The Holy Spirit comes in order to console, to sustain man in trials and doubts.

And now let us look, my dear ones, at how it is among us, Catholics, lay and clerical. Are we really instruments of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter? Do we make efforts in our life to heal that bruised reed? Do we make efforts to give good counsel to the doubting, to console the afflicted? Are we, Catholics of tradition, living in the twentieth century, comforters, or rather spiteful people, oppressors, haters? Because when one looks, my dear ones, there is no lack of those who keep their hands devoutly folded, who pray beneath the statue, but have the devil under their skin. There are many such, my dear ones, unfortunately, among Catholics, who with pleasure are able to break that bruised reed to the end under the pretext of piety. There are many who will say: "I have been in tradition for many long years, I know everything best. I will teach everyone." There are many, my dear ones, who are not comforters but destroyers.

Catholicism, my dear ones, ought to form in us the attitude of a comforter, of one who sustains, who guides, who helps a soul that has fallen to rise again. And we must ask ourselves how far there is in me a readiness to be a comforter. Or perhaps it is that I am simply a deeply unhappy man, filled with anger, spite, hatred of God and of other people, which I simply hide behind a mask of pseudo-piety, pseudo-Catholicism. Perhaps it is, my dear ones, that this anger and spite pour out of me, that I want to flood the whole world with this anger, this spite, though I do it as one supposedly concerned for the soul and for the Church. There is no lack, my dear ones, of such wretched people among contemporary Catholics, such wretched people who are not comforters, who do not lead stray sheep to Christ's sheepfold, but on the contrary become a source of falling, a source of breakdown, a source of the loss of faith.

And we must, my dear ones, speak about this, especially in these times in which we have to live. We hear in today's Gospel: "The prince of this world cometh." And in precisely these times, in difficult times, in times of crisis, it is necessary, my dear friends, that there should not be lacking in the Church those who will live truly by the Holy Spirit, who will be comforters. And for this, my dear ones, we must pray fervently today. Remembering the day on which we received the sacrament of Confirmation, remembering the day on which we were strengthened

with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, we must pray, my dear friends, that we may become instruments of God's grace towards our neighbours, that we may never, my dear ones, become the cause of the breakdown, the fall, of our brethren in the faith, but rather that we may sustain those who are weak, who have various doubts, and not crush them with our person, with our theories, with our hatred.

PRAYER FOR THE STRAYING

Dear faithful, rejoicing today together with the whole Holy Church in the descent of the Holy Spirit, we should desire nothing so much as to see as many souls as possible on the road leading to where our Saviour sits at the right hand of the Father. We must pray fervently for all those who still wander in the darkness of contemporary paganism, of atheistic materialism, that they may not harden their hearts against the action of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who after all does not cease to call every man, to draw him toward the true God.

We must, my dear ones, pray fervently also for all those in whose souls the flame of divine life was kindled, who were baptised, who approached the holy sacraments, but in whose hearts that flame of divine life has gone out, who have sunk into godlessness, into sin. We must beg fervently that they not reject the salutary inspirations that come from the Holy Spirit, that as soon as possible, like prodigal sons, they return to the Father who is in heaven, and that they not perish of want and hunger.

We must, my dear ones, pray fervently for all those who, despite difficulties, remain under the banner of Christ the King, under the banner of the Cross of Christ, that we may not forget that we are obliged to cooperate with God's grace. With God's grace, which has the power to transform us, to sanctify us. Let us make use of those gifts with which the Holy Spirit endowed us through the holy sacrament of Confirmation, and let us bear witness with courage, by our deeds and words, to the great works of God.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful and kindle in them the fire of Thy love. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Praised be Jesus Christ.