

Lesson-4

CHURCH: THE COMMUNITY LED BY THE SPIRIT



Jesus had ordered his disciples not to leave the city until they receive power from on high. So they all remained together in prayer till the day of the Pentecost. We read in the Acts of the Apostles: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8). These words of Jesus were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. On that day Mary, the mother of Jesus and all the disciples were together. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts. 2:2-4).

Being filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in different tongues. There were Jews from every part of the world dwelling in Jerusalem in those days. Hearing the loud noise they all came out and to their surprise each one heard the apostles speaking in his own language. But some mockingly said: “They are filled with new wine.”(Acts

2:13). But Peter standing with the eleven, addressed them, telling that they were not drunk as some of them suspected. It was rather the fulfillment of the prophecy of God that in the last days God will pour out His spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:1-17).

Those who listened to Peter on that day believed in Jesus and received Baptism. There were about three thousand persons added to their group on that day. Thus the Church was formed in Jerusalem. The Lord added to their number everyday, people whom He wanted to be saved (Acts. 2:1-42). The disciples of the Lord, being filled with the Holy Spirit went to every part of the world and proclaimed the Gospel.

The Work of the Spirit in the Early Christian Community

The community of the believers that was formed through the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit was led by the Spirit. Whenever they faced opposition and persecution they prayed to the Lord. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and preached the Gospel with courage.

The active presence of the Holy Spirit in the early Church can be clearly seen in the activities of the apostles. We can see the Spirit directly leading the apostles, talking to them and helping them to take proper decisions. It is the Spirit who gives them clear instructions as to where they should go and what they should do (Acts 16:6). The Spirit dwells with them, strengthens them and makes them enthusiastic and cheerful. “Now in the Church at Antioch... while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” (Acts. 13:1-3). “So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.” (Acts : 13:4).

The non-Jews were accepted into the Church for the first time after Peter had a vision during his prayer. As he was pondering over the meaning of his vision, the Spirit told him: “While



Peter was still thinking about the vision, the spirit said to him, Look, three men are searching for you. Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them” (Acts 10:19-20). Being thus led by the Spirit, Peter reached the house of Cornelius, a gentile. He preached the Gospel to the people who were gathered there. While he was speaking, the Holy Spirit came upon them all and they all received baptism and became members of the Church.

The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The Church is the edifice built on Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit builds it up by bestowing on it various gifts and fruits for its growth and fulfillment.

The gift of the Holy Spirit varies from person to person. “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit to another gifts of healing by the one spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of Spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually Just as the Spirit chooses” (1 Cor. 12: 7-11).

St. Paul names the fruits of the Holy Spirit distributed among the believers. They are love, happiness, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control, endurance, chastity and moderation. All these are given by the Holy Spirit in order to build up the Church and make it grow.

The Holy Spirit Leads the Churches in Times of Persecution and Problems

The Holy Spirit empowered the Church when she had to face problems and suffer persecution. Stephen, one full of faith and the Holy Spirit, was arrested by the Jewish authorities because he boldly professed his faith in Jesus. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen dared to preach Jesus to the very authorities who ordered his arrest. They decided to stone Stephen to death. It was the Holy Spirit who strengthened Stephen to remain calm when those men rushed to him to stone him to death (Act: 7:54-60). The same Spirit led Saul, the one who was intent on persecuting the Church, to the

conversion of heart (Acts 9). And he turned out to be Paul, a zealous preacher of the Gospel and a martyr for Christ.

The Temple of the Holy Spirit

The Second Vatican Council (The Church 4) teaches us that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple. This teaching is based on the words of St. Paul in the first Corinthians: “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple” (1 Cor. 3:16-17). We are God's temples, because, God's Spirit dwells in us. We read in the scriptures how the risen Jesus gave his disciples the Holy Spirit by breathing on them (Jn. 20:22-23).



To be Led by the Spirit

To be led by the Spirit, we should live according to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We receive such promptings through the commandments of God, the laws of the Church and the directions of our superiors. Our attitude to the Holy Spirit should be one of submission and obedience. The Bible tells us that we should not grieve the Holy Spirit. (1 Thes. 5:19). St. Paul, in the letter to the Romans, again speaks to us about the Holy Spirit: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a Spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a Spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God...” (Rom. 8: 14-16)

The Spirit is Given through the Sacraments

We receive the Holy Spirit through every sacrament that the Church administers. When we receive baptism, God's Spirit is poured into us and we become God's children. Again, when we are anointed by the holy oil, the Holy Spirit is infused

into us in a special way and we are enabled to preach the gospel and live it out in our lives. We receive the Holy Spirit through the **Holy Eucharistic celebration and communion**. Through the **Sacrament of Reconciliation**, we get back the divine life lost through our sins. Through the **Sacrament of the Anointing of the sick**, we receive **healing, forgiveness of sins and strength to endure pains**. Through the Holy Orders the Holy Spirit gives the power to participate in the Lord's kingly, prophetic and priestly ministries and to minister to the people of God. In Holy Matrimony, the Spirit gives the gift to do the duties of married life.



The Church is the community of believers who are born through the Holy Spirit and constantly led by the Holy Spirit. We are being led by the Spirit when we listen to the Word of God, obey the commandments of God and receive the sacraments.

**Word of God
to Read and
Meditate**

Rom. 8:9-17

Word of God to Remember

“You did not receive a Spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a Spirit of adoption”
(Rom. 8:15).

Let us Pray

O Lord Jesus, who promised us the Holy Spirit to walk us on the path of truth, help us to live by the promptings of the Spirit.

My Resolution

I will live by the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

To Think with the Church

The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple. Through them He prays and bears witness to their adoptive sonship. He guides the Church to the fullness of all truth (Vat. II, The Church, No. 4).

To Know the Mother Church

The Nazranies lived a life that faithfully followed the traditions and life-style of the community founded by St. Thomas. They called the sum total of their life-style '**Mar Thomma Margam**'. They believed that their Church possessed the authenticity, equality and nobility like any other Churches.

Questions

1. How do we know that the early Church was led by the Holy Spirit?
2. How does the Holy Spirit build up the Church?
3. What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed on the faithful?
4. How do we become the temples of the Holy Spirit?
5. What should we do that we may be led by the Spirit?