

The Holy Spirit Consoles Us

“Love is strong as death” (8:6)

Consolator Optime

- In Sacred Scripture and in the liturgy, earthly joy is most fittingly called consolation. Consolation is the happiness that carries pain with it. It springs from the very heart of grief; therefore, the Holy Spirit is called “the Paraclete,” “the Consoler,” because he gives souls in exile a happiness that is not incompatible with grief, but rather supposes it. Therefore, in the Sequence of the Mass of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is called “Consolator optime— Best Consoler”; and in the Collect we ask God to grant us the joy of the divine consolations of the Holy Spirit.

1. THE CONSOLATION OF FREEDOM

- The first consolation, or perhaps it is better to say the first trace of consolation that the Holy Spirit bestows on souls, is **the joy of freedom**.
- If we are not happy, it is because we are not free; because **we carry chains** we may be unaware of, or may even love. These chains are our attachments, the wealth that turns our heart to material things, the pleasures that weaken our will, the pride that carries us above ourselves.
- **The Holy Spirit detaches our heart from earthly things**, infuses into our soul divine poverty, and makes us free.
- **St. Francis** was the saint of happiness because he was the saint of detachment. When he had given everything he owned into the hands of the bishop and had been wedded to Lady Poverty in the church of St. Mary of the Angels, he felt divine happiness welling up in his heart. So full was his joy that he spent the rest of his life singing. He had the ineffable consolation of freedom.

2. THE CONSOLATION OF UNION:

- The function of love is to **unite those who love each other**. Two beings become one and this fusion is never accomplished so perfectly as in divine love. To repeat again what Sacred Scripture says: “he who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with him” (1 Cor 6:17).
- The marvelous union of divine love gives us **God to possess and carry in our heart**, as our own, our treasure. And who can doubt that we are consoled, that we vibrate with happiness, when we are bearing infinite Love within us? The troubles of this earth, the shadows of life, and the pains in our body do not matter if we have God in our soul.
- Remember the words of Donoso Cortés: “When love calls me I do not ask questions; I follow, because wherever it takes me there will we be, the Beloved, myself, and our love, and that is heaven.”

3. THE CONSOLATION OF HOPE:

- Yet even though we possess God on earth, even though our heart is a divine temple and we bear the celestial treasure within, **the possession of God is always imperfect.** While we are on earth, we can lose him; and even if we do not lose him, yet he is not revealed to us in the full splendor of his beauty; the narrowness of our spirit cannot hold the marvels of divinity.
- But the Comforter gives us the consolation of hope. **He is the pledge of our inheritance.** And we rejoice in our hope, not only because we trust in the promise of God, but also because we carry within us the guarantee of its fulfillment.

4. THE CONSOLATION OF PAIN:

- There is still another consolation that the Spirit pours into our heart. It is **the joy of suffering**. It might seem absurd to combine two things so apparently incompatible and contrary. What heavenly bond can join them? Only love. As it wondrously united them in the soul of Christ, so does it bring them together in our poor hearts. The Holy Spirit, infinite Love, who gives himself to us, who lives and abides in our souls, illumines our spirits and warms our hearts with a celestial tenderness, teaches this ineffable secret of joy in suffering.

- “A great thing is love—a great good every way; which alone lightens all that is burdensome and bears equally all that is unequal. For it carries a burden without being burdened and makes all else that is bitter, sweet and savory.... Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher.... When weary, it is not tired; when straitened, it is not constrained, when frightened, it is not disturbed.”
(Imitation of Christ)

- St. Francis of Assisi once told Brother Leo: Perfect happiness does not consist in speaking all languages, nor in accomplishing great deeds, nor even in converting unbelievers to the faith and bringing sinners to the feet of God. Perfect happiness consists in suffering much for the blessed Christ, who willed to suffer so much for us. Perhaps we may not understand this sublime doctrine. If we do not, let us remember these greatest witnesses of all, the saints, who show us that it is possible to find happiness in suffering; and not just any kind of happiness— perfect happiness.