



O HOLY SPIRIT

Inflame me!

Eph 1:14 & Rom 8:23

Monthly Reflection:

May 2020

As Christians, we are familiar with different aspects of the Holy Spirit - that He abides in us, that we cannot say or do anything that pleases God without His prompting and that the Spirit is given to those who thirst for Him. We also know that we need to pray for the gifts, fruits and charisms of the Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God. Though these ideas about the Holy Spirit are biblical, they are rather one-dimensional. They reveal what man needs to do in order to receive the gift of the Spirit and to be led by Him. However, the Bible presents another marvellous dimension, that of the heavenly Father who longs to bestow upon His children the gift of His Spirit.

These views are beautifully expressed by St. Paul through two Greek words: Arrabon (2 Cor 1:22, 5:5 & Eph 1:14) and Aparche (Rom 8/23).

Deposit or Guarantee or Pledge (Gk - Arrabon)

The Holy Spirit is God's 'deposit' for us. What does it really mean?

Imagine that you seriously consider buying a house which you really like. The price is manageable and it offers all that your family longs for. How do you seal the deal? By paying a token deposit as advance. Then at a later convenient date, you would pay the rest of the money and make the house your own!. God desires to own us completely since He considers us indispensable. This is a truth that can be understood only by a heart that knows that God is love. He sent His own Son to save us, "setting his seal of ownership on us, and putting his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come" (cf 2 Cor 1:22).

God does not want to lose us. So He gives us His Spirit as a guarantee or as a token advance. This gesture has three dimensions. First of all, He ensures that we belong to Him forever. Secondly, he expresses the value and dignity with which He regards us. Finally, the guarantee of the Spirit reveals the richness of the treasures that await us.

First fruits (Gk - Aparche)

"Take the first fruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name" (Deut 26:2).

Every Jew was deeply aware that the first fruits of the soil was always given as an offering to God in the temple. It acknowledged that everything in creation is a gift from God to man and the first fruits was a token of surrendering all that he had to God (Ex 23:19, Num 15:20, Neh 10:35,37). The offering of the first fruits had great symbolic value as it was a practice that declared the sovereignty of God. In a fascinating way, St. Paul draws parallels to this ancient Jewish tradition where he refers to the first fruit as the Holy Spirit (see Rom 8:23). The Greek term 'Aparche' is a translation of the Hebrew word 'Reshith'. In this expression, the giver is God himself. It is as though He is in obligation to man, as if it is the right of man, that God gives him the Holy Spirit as the first fruit of all his gifts to humanity. This word reveals a God who values and esteems man to the extent of offering the gift of the Spirit to him, as the first fruit of all the treasures of heaven.

Pentecost - the need of God and man

While the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles elucidate the Holy Spirit and Baptism in the Holy Spirit from the point of view of man, through the use of these two Greek words, St. Paul establishes God's point of view and His attitude towards man. Both these views complement each other. In the first perspective, man thirsts to be filled with God's Spirit, and in the other, God is eager to endow His Spirit on man. If so, what comes in the way? Our lack of awareness!

Prayer: O Spirit of God, you alone satisfy my thirst! You alone perfect the experience of God's love in my life. Open my eyes to know that you live in me as the Father's gift - His first fruits and seal. Inflame my heart, O Holy Spirit of God!

