

HOMILY
17 October 2018

“Obedient listening to the Holy Spirit”

Fr. Floriano De Fabiis (MAPRAES)

The Spirit of God has guided the history of salvation from the very beginning. He led the people of Israel into the Promised Land. In the fullness of time Mary was prepared to accept the mystery of redemption and the coming of the savior as the new Ark of the Covenant. He sustained the person of Jesus in the fulfillment of the Paschal Mystery, supporting his human frailty in his Passion and bringing him into the glory of the Resurrection.

On the day of Pentecost, the spirit of the risen Lord was abundantly poured out on the apostles, and the Church was born. The twenty centuries of ecclesial history have been an indissoluble interweaving of human history and salvation history. The fundamental attitude of the Church has always been that of obedient listening to the Spirit and in order to embrace the poverty of human history with creative love.

ATTENTIVE TO THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Paul of the Cross founded our Institute in obedience to the Spirit. God gave our Founder the "eyes of the heart"-- a particular grace to see in the crucifix the icon of God's infinite love towards humanity. It made him able to penetrate, in a singular way, the depth of human poverty. He revealed to him that the Passion of Jesus, "the greatest and most overwhelming work of God's love" (Letters, II, 499) is the most effective remedy for the salvation of humanity (Const. 1d).

You are assembled here by the Spirit in the charism given to Paul of the Cross and conveyed to us in all its vitality and energy.

In these days we continue to intermingle human choices with the constant illumination of the Spirit. Additionally, as you carry out your human task, you will need to be attentive to the Spirit with all your strength. You must choose the Superior General and his Council (the government of the Congregation); however, you must carefully discern in which direction the Spirit is moving you. You are called to read, with humility and faith, the signs of God within our history.

READING A SIGN

This year is a special time for us Passionists. We all know that on 29 June 2018 the "Congregation of the Nuns of the Passion of Jesus Christ" was erected. This event does not concern only the nuns, but also us because the Passionist Family in the strict sense (a father, a son and a daughter) finally had its fulfillment.

In the heart and mind of our Founder, there was only one charism and one Institute incarnate in two branches, masculine and feminine (cf. Giovanni Cioni, "Annals"). The charism unites us in a substantial way and makes us, Passionists and Passionist nuns, brothers and sisters. The *Memoria Passionis* summarizes the common charism in the twofold contemplative and apostolic dimension and engages us in reciprocal, more incisive and more deliberate collaboration.

GROUNDING BY OUR ROOTS

On this election day you are called to immerse yourself in our charismatic richness and to perceive the light that you will find reflected in the eyes of your confreres.

The Spirit will guide you to choose those religious who are in love with the crucified Jesus and with the Passionist charism. Choose those who are committed to building fraternal life by openness, listening, humility and trust in their fellow religious. Furthermore, choose those who possess a spirit of vigilant discernment, something that was considered by the Founder to be the criterion for superiors and for the good governance of the Congregation.

The Church needs our charismatic fidelity because ours is the clearest and most central among charisms. By means of this charism "*the Congregation takes her place in the Church and consecrates herself fully to its mission*" (Const. 6b). If we are faithful to it, we remain Passionists and we do not

become something else, like salt that gives flavour only if it remains such; otherwise it is thrown away and trampled (cf Mt 5.11; Lk 14.34). The specific task of the government of the Congregation, combined with the religious, is to meditate again on the charism in its essence and to discover the appropriate means to make it comprehensible and effective today. It is also its duty to guide the Congregation to offer coherent and charismatic testimony in the Church and in the world (Const. 2b).

We are a small reality that encounters great difficulties, like the Church and humanity at large; however, St. Paul of the Cross urges us to be confident because the "boat" of the Congregation is guided by the Divine "pilot": *"The storms roused against this tiny boat are great and fearful, but the Divine Pilot is steering so that there be no shipwreck. And while my sins may be great, nevertheless, the mercy of God sustains me."* (Letters, Vol. I, 551, to T. Fossi).

Pope Francis uses the same image for the Church today-- *"we live in a context in which the boat of the Church is assailed by contrary and violent winds.* (To the priests of the Diocese of Créteil, France, October 1, 2018).

This reality demands that we entrust ourselves to God and to the guidance of his Holy Spirit. We will thus face the difficulties of the mission by uniting our weak forces with the power of the Spirit.

WITH GLORY AND HOPE

Dear brother Capitulars, your task is very important because you are the mediators of God's will for us Passionists. You are only instruments; however, you must be outstanding and hopeful because you are at the service of a great charism in the Church. The gift of the Spirit has been bestowed upon all of us, and upon you it is bestowed in a particular way. His energy urges us to proclaim and to offer to all people the Paschal Mystery of salvation.

Many men and women, our contemporaries, are crucified in body, mind and heart. Today evil attacks humanity in its anthropological dimension, creating bewilderment and a sense of hopelessness. It is our mission to teach people to meditate on the love of Jesus crucified. Our charism is timely and necessary for the Church and for mankind in every age (see Const. N. 2b).

You have a great opportunity to instill hope in the hearts of the Passionists and in all people. This responsibility impels you to make choices, elective and programmatic, with an attitude of profound discernment.

Let us ask the Father, in the name of Jesus, to bestow the Spirit through the maternal presence of Mary, the intercession of our Founder, Paul of the Cross, and all our Passionist Saints.

May the Passion of Jesus Christ be always in our hearts!