

A Reading from a Conference of St. Madeleine Sophie Barat for the Feast of Pentecost

Madeleine Sophie assures her hearers that all those who have received baptism and confirmation are by virtue of the sacraments, filled with the Holy Spirit; they possess the gifts of the Spirit, on deposit as it were, to be drawn on as each person makes progress in opening himself or herself to the action of God. Then she continues:

I am sure that there is not a single one here who does not desire to receive the Holy Spirit; for that, it is necessary, to be free from self-seeking; the Spirit loves to act in persons who are entirely empty, who give themselves without reserve; obstacles impede the Spirit's action, but where the space is clear her operation soon begins to be felt.

Persons so given to the Spirit no longer walk but fly; the greatest sacrifices no longer cost; suffering does not overwhelm them. Those who are totally given to the Holy Spirit find flowers among the thorns.

Who can say what takes place in those persons who are so given to the action of the Holy Spirit! I will give you the example of your own sisters [Philippine and her companions]: those who are the first to go to bring the Kingdom of God to that other world where there are so many needs. If you read their letters, you will see how in the midst of their troubles, of the most painful labors, and of incredible suffering and privations, they are inundated with joy and say that they would not change their poverty, their suffering, their cross for any other lot. Why is that? Because they have given themselves completely to God, they have kept nothing for themselves, and the Holy Spirit is filling them with his gifts.

If only it were given to me, if only I were not so unworthy that God would give me the grace to speak to you of the happiness of persons who give themselves over to the Holy Spirit, completely and without reserve! If I could tell you all that takes place in them, if I could depict their happiness. It is no longer they who act; it is God. They go nowhere, they do nothing except by the Spirit's inspiration; everything becomes easy for them; they no longer experience difficulty; they meet no obstacles. The Holy Spirit pulls them along and sets up a communication between them and heaven – a ladder like Jacob's ladder, on which the angels continually descend and ascend – the good action, desires, initiatives of these faithful persons mount towards heaven, and the Holy Spirit send them back down full of new graces that produce abundant fruit. Now if the happiness of a single person is so great, what would be the happiness of a whole gathering, of a whole Society, [of a Network of schools] that was guided entirely by the Spirit and that would give itself to the Spirit's leading! It would be a foretaste of heaven! What peace, what unanimity and, at the same time, what good would we not be capable of producing?

Now these persons about whom I have been speaking have found the secret of touching hearts; as they are no longer on the lookout for their own advantage, they do not even know whether they are doing good. In a certain sense, they do not even desire to do good; rather they have only one desire: to follow the impulse of the Holy Spirit. As to good or poor success, they calmly leave that to God. Nothing can trouble them or cause them to lose peace. Let us open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, for she hears the prayers of sincere hearts who give themselves in truth. Let us call on the Spirit, therefore, so that she can fill us with her gifts.