

THE DIVINE MISSION OF THE HOLY GHOST

HILARY McDONAGH, O.F.M.

IN the prayer composed by Pope Pius XII for the Jubilee Year of 1950, there is one petition that comes strikingly back to my mind as I am invited to write on the subject of the Holy Ghost. It is: '*grant unto orphans, affectionate protection*'; and it is particularly by the gift of the Holy Spirit that God answers such a petition. Indeed it would be better to say that it is with no less a gift than that of the Holy Spirit that the prayer is answered. We who are 'orphans' as far as the lives of our spirit are concerned, have ourselves to blame if we do not benefit always by that affectionate protection with the giving of which the mission of the Holy Ghost is concerned.

In the Encyclical '*Divinum Illud*' (9 May, 1897), specially devoted to the Holy Ghost, Leo XIII deplored the fact that the third Person of the Trinity is so little known, and his divine mission so little appreciated by us. He also pleaded for a speedy amelioration of this sad state of affairs which he considered 'unworthy of the children of light'. If we are to try to remedy this defect and dispose ourselves for the befriending influence of the Holy Ghost, we should do well to recall what a 'divine mission' is, and what is the particular object of the divine mission of the Paraclete, whom Christ promised us from the Father.

The 'divine mission' is a technical term of Christian teaching. It connotes the sending into this world of a divine Person for a specific purpose. There are but two such divine missions, that of the Son, and that of the Holy Ghost. The mission of the Son began at the Incarnation and ended with the death of Christ on Calvary. The mission of the Holy Ghost began at the first Pentecost, and continues for ever. These two divine missions are not mutually exclusive, they are both distinct phases of one and the same divine work. Without the accomplishment of the mission of the Son we should never have been redeemed, and without the accomplishment of the mission of the Holy Ghost we shall never be saved or sanctified. Both these missions then are not

merely precious, but even vitally necessary to us.

But how is the mission of the Holy Ghost connected with the mission of the Son? The second divine mission is in fact the complement of the first. When he came to the end of his life on earth, our Lord could indeed say to the Father: 'I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do'. Yet, as Pope Leo says, 'for ineffable reasons inscrutable to us, it pleased our Lord and Saviour to leave the "crowning" of that work to the Holy Ghost'. To those to whom he had said that he would not leave them 'orphans', Christ also said: 'It is expedient for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Paraclete will not come to you.' So the Apostles, on the instruction of Christ, waited in Jerusalem after the Ascension expecting the coming of the Holy Ghost before they set out to teach all ages and all nations. They could not thus set out without the Holy Spirit.

The connection between the two divine missions may be compared to the connection which exists between the testator and the administrator of a will. On Calvary indeed Christ bequeathed to us his great legacy of graces; but since no one may benefit by a will except through the offices of the administrator or executor, we have to wait on the Holy Ghost as the divinely appointed administrator of the testament of Christ. It is therefore the mission of the Holy Ghost to administer the will of Christ at all times and in every place. It is by administering that will, by fulfilling that mission that the Holy Ghost protects us. His mission is exercised in a two-fold way, both externally and internally; and both the external and the internal mission are vitally necessary to us. Without the external mission it would seem that the Church would fall to pieces, her teaching would become vague, her ruling would become mere domination, her sacraments would be invalid, her sacrifice meaningless. Without the internal, the seeds of the Church's teaching, ruling and sanctifying would not fructify in our souls. Indeed, it may be said that even if our Lord himself visibly appeared to us we should not be able to understand his words supernaturally, unless the Holy Ghost at the same time taught us the same words in our hearts. We should be no better off than those who lived and moved

in the daily and visible school of our Lord when he was on earth. To them he had indeed preached much of his 'Kingdom'. But even on the way to the Mount Olivet for the Ascension he is asked, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?' After telling them that it was not for them to know the time and moments which the heavenly Father had reserved to himself, our Lord said: 'But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth'.

When the Holy Ghost did come upon the Apostles, there was no more misunderstanding concerning the kingdom. Enlightened by him, the Apostles understood the truth of the Kingdom, and not only preached it in that sense, but also laid down their lives for it.

We may therefore with confidence ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and hearts, and to surround us always with the loving protection of his divine mission, so to bring us, 'orphans', safely through the trials of this life, to the home of the Father, through Christ our Lord. Amen.



... AND IN THE HOLY GHOST

DEBORAH PEASE ARMSTRONG

THE 'Forgotten Paraclete', the title of a small and now unobtainable book by a Catholic writer (Mgr Maurice Laudrieux), suggests that the 'normal' spirituality taught in seminaries and faithfully distributed to the Catholic flock since the seventeenth century has tended to ignore both the theology of the Holy Ghost and the necessary corollaries which should develop from it in daily Christian prayer and life.

This has not happened without some historically recognisable reason. Père Congar, O.P., explains the situation when he writes: 'Heresies always represent the erection into a system of undue or partial emphasis on a particular