



“You shall be comforted in Jerusalem” Isaiah 66:10-14

May 2014: Reflection

The Church, further, "that Jerusalem which is above" is also called "our mother". It is described as the spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb, whom Christ "loved and for whom He delivered Himself up that He might sanctify her"... and whom, finally, He filled with heavenly gifts for all eternity, in order that we may know the love of God and of Christ for us, a love which surpasses all knowledge. (Lumen Gentium, Second Vatican Council)

As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council taught, there are numerous images and metaphors used to describe the Church which was instituted by Christ. This month, let us reflect upon the mystery of the Church, first as she stands in relation to Christ, as His Bride, and then as she stands in relation to us, as our Mother.

Since the beginning of time, God has eagerly desired to draw all men to Himself. But exactly how near does God wish to come to us? And how near can we who are weak and sinful come to the all-powerful and perfectly holy God? St. Paul teaches us that the intimacy of husband and wife, beautiful as it is, is still only a reflection of the profound mystery of the union between Christ and the Church (cf. Eph 5:31-32). As Adam's bride came from his side, the Church was formed from Christ's pierced side, and He has loved her and espoused her. As the ideal Husband, He loves her unconditionally and He can never abandon her. He says to her, "I am with you always, even until the end of time." Therefore, as the Prophet Isaiah says, "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her...!"

As the members of the Church, we must discover anew this richness in her. Since Christ has filled her with "heavenly gifts for all eternity", she has been blessed with spiritual fruitfulness. As a mother, she has been entrusted with channels of grace to nourish all her faithful unto salvation. These channels of grace are many. In the Church we find the infallible teaching of Christ, including the Bible. We must pause and reflect on how much grace we have received because the Church has compiled, safeguarded, and passed down to us the Bible along with its sound interpretation. Likewise, we may also reflect on how much we have received as individuals and as a movement through the ministry of many priests and bishops, those appointed by God to watch over His flock.

But the greatest channel of grace that the Church has been blessed with by her Founder is the Sacraments. In the seven Sacraments, we do not participate in merely symbolic rituals but they are the very means that God has established to work most powerfully among us. It begins in Baptism, where we die with Christ and rise with Him to a new life of grace, regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. Similarly through all the Sacraments in different ways Christ strengthens and transforms us so that we can live saintly lives set apart for God. The chiefest among the Sacraments is the Eucharist, where we receive not only the "heavenly gifts" but the Giver of gifts as well. St. Alphonsus Liguori taught, "One single Mass gives more honor to God than all the penances of the Saints, the labors of the Apostles, the sufferings of the martyrs, and even the burning love of the Blessed Mother of God."

Since Christ gave the Church to us as our Mother, let us resolve to be her most faithful and loving children. Let us turn to her for our spiritual nourishment and care. Then, we shall surely know the promise that God made thousands of years ago through the prophet Isaiah: "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."