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The Coming of the Holy Spirit: Magisterium, Saints, Poets

In the atmosphere of expectation that prevailed in the Upper Room after the Ascension, Mary played a central role in the descent of the Holy Spirit.

07/20/2011

VOICE OF THE MAGISTERIUM

In the atmosphere of expectation that prevailed in the Upper Room after the Ascension, what was Mary's position in relation to the descent of the Holy Spirit?

The Council expressly underscores her prayerful presence while waiting for the outpouring of the Paraclete: she prays, "imploring the gift of the Spirit." This observation is particularly significant since at the Annunciation the Holy Spirit had descended upon her, "overshadowing" her and bringing about the Incarnation of the Word.

Having already had a unique experience of the effectiveness of such a gift, the Blessed Virgin was in a condition to appreciate it more than anyone; indeed, she owed her motherhood to the mysterious intervention of the Spirit, who had made her the way by which the Saviour came into the world.

Unlike those in the Upper Room who were waiting in fearful expectation, she, fully aware of the importance of her Son's promise to the disciples (cf. Jn 14:16), helped the community to be well disposed to the coming of the "Paraclete."

Thus, while her unique experience made her ardently long for the Spirit's coming, it also involved her in preparing the minds and hearts of those around her.

During that prayer in the Upper Room, in an attitude of deep communion with the Apostles, with some women and with Jesus' "brethren," the Mother of the Lord prays for the gift of the Spirit for herself and for the community.

It was appropriate that the first outpouring of the Spirit upon her, which had happened in view of her divine motherhood, should be repeated and reinforced. Indeed, at

the foot of the Cross Mary was entrusted with a new motherhood, which concerned Jesus' disciples. It was precisely this mission that demanded a renewed gift of the Spirit. The Blessed Virgin therefore wanted it for the fruitfulness of her spiritual motherhood.

While at the moment of the Incarnation the Holy Spirit had descended upon her as a person called to take part worthily in the great mystery, everything is now accomplished for the sake of the Church, whose image, model and mother Mary is called to be.

In the Church and for the Church, mindful of Jesus' promise, she waits for Pentecost and implores a multiplicity of gifts for everyone, in accordance with each one's personality and mission.

Mary's prayer has particular significance in the Christian

community: it fosters the coming of the Spirit, imploring his action in the hearts of the disciples and in the world. Just as in the Incarnation the Spirit had formed the physical body of Christ in her virginal womb, now in the Upper Room the same Spirit comes down to give life to the Mystical Body.

Thus Pentecost is also a fruit of the Blessed Virgin's incessant prayer, which is accepted by the Paraclete with special favour because it is an expression of her motherly love for the Lord's disciples.

In contemplating Mary's powerful intercession as she waits for the Holy Spirit, Christians of every age have frequently had recourse to her intercession on the long and tiring journey to salvation, in order to receive the gifts of the Paraclete in greater abundance.

Responding to the prayer of the Blessed Virgin and the community gathered in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit bestows the fullness of his gifts on the Blessed Virgin and those present, working a deep transformation in them for the sake of spreading the Good News. The Mother of Christ and his disciples are granted new strength and new apostolic energy for the Church's growth. In particular, the outpouring of the Spirit leads Mary to exercise her spiritual motherhood in an exceptional way, through her presence imbued with charity and her witness of faith.

In the nascent Church she passes on to the disciples her memories of the Incarnation, the infancy, the hidden life and the mission of her divine Son as a priceless treasure, thus helping to make him known and to strengthen the faith of believers.

We have no information about Mary's activity in the early Church, but we may suppose that after Pentecost her life would have continued to be hidden and discreet, watchful and effective. Since she was enlightened and guided by the Spirit, she exercised a deep influence on the community of the Lord's disciples.

*from John Paul II, General Audience,
May 28, 1997*

VOICE OF THE SAINTS

After seeing the Son, Word of the Father, true God and King of all creation, rise from the tomb—an event greater than any other—and ascend to Heaven with the human nature he had taken from her, after all these glorious deeds, Mary wasn't spared a life of toil and trial here below. It was as though her public life began at this moment and her concern for the entire Church: *I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber*

to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob (Ps 131:4). And when the Apostles dispersed throughout the whole world, the Holy Mother of Christ, as Queen of the universe, lived in the center of the world, in Jerusalem, in Zion, with the beloved disciple, whom our Lord Jesus Christ had given to her as her son...

attributed to St. Maximus the Confessor (7th c.), "The Life of Mary," no. 95.

Let's turn now to the days between the ascension and Pentecost. As a result of the triumph of Christ's resurrection, the disciples are full of faith; they eagerly await the promised Holy Spirit. They want to stay close to one another, and so we find them "with Mary, the mother of Jesus," praying as a single family.

It was St Luke who related this fact, the evangelist who gave us the longest account of Jesus' childhood. It is as if he wanted us to understand that just as Mary had a major role in the incarnation of the Word, she was intimately involved in the beginning of the Church, Christ's body.

From the first moment of the Church all Christians who have sought the love of God — that love revealed in Jesus Christ — have encountered our Lady and experienced her motherly care. She can truly be called the Mother of Christians. As St Augustine puts it: "With her charity she cooperates in the birth of faithful to the Church and they are members of a head, of which she is effectively Mother in the flesh."

It is not surprising then that one of the oldest witnesses to this devotion to Mary is confident prayer: "We gather under your protection, holy

Mother of God. Do not reject the
prayers we say to you in our need,
but save us from all dangers, O
glorious and blessed Virgin."

from St. Josemaria, *Christ is Passing
By*, no. 141

VOICE OF THE POETS

God created the holy maidservant
like the interior courtyard of a
temple,

respectfully surrounded by
reverence,

open to rain and the dew.

Then he himself descended from the
clouds of heaven

On silent wing, soft and humble,

as once the dew fell upon Gideon's
fleece.

But no one has succeeded
in penetrating the mystery, fulfilled
in the silent way
of God, become man in the womb of
a virgin.

O profound zeal of the Lord for our
salvation!

The Virgin offers herself for the son
without the collaboration of man;
sublime mystical image
for the marriage of the Church with
Christ!

She, too, is indeed a sister of the Lord
and loving wife; and as mother
she receives the seed of the eternal
Word,
carries the people in her womb

and gives birth to them.

The spouse whom no one has
touched,

truly remains the sister of love;

her embrace is the Spirit,

for the one who loves her is God.

by Paulinus of Nola (4-5th c.)

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