

ZE07052529 - 2007-05-25

Permalink: <http://www.zenit.org/article-19738?l=english>

# Father Cantalamessa on Pentecost

## Pontifical Household Preacher Comments on Sunday's Readings

ROME, MAY 25, 2007 (Zenit.org).- Here is a translation of a commentary by the Pontifical Household preacher, Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, on the readings from this Sunday's liturgy.

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Send Forth Your Spirit and They Shall be Created

Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23

The Gospel presents Jesus, who in the cenacle on Easter evening, "breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" This breathing of Jesus recalls God's action who, in the creation, "formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being" (cf. Genesis 2:7). With his gesture Jesus indicates that the Holy Spirit is the divine breath that gives life to the new creation as he gave life to the first creation. The responsorial psalm highlights this theme: "Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth."

Proclaiming that the Holy Spirit is Creator means saying that his sphere of action is not restricted to the Church, but extends to the entire creation. No place and no time is without his active presence. He acts in and out of the Bible; he acts before Christ, during the time of Christ, and after Christ, even if he never acts apart from Christ. "All truth, by whomever it is spoken," Thomas Aquinas has written, "comes from the Holy Spirit." The action of the Spirit of Christ outside the Church is not the same as his action in the Church and in the sacraments. Outside he acts by his power; in the Church he acts by his presence, in person.

The most important thing about the creative power of the Holy Spirit is not, however, to understand it and explain its implications, but to experience it. But what does it mean to experience the Spirit as Creator? To understand it, let us take the creation account as our point of departure. "In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, and the Spirit of the Lord brooded over the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2). We conclude from this that the universe already existed in the moment when the Spirit intervened, but it was formless and dark, chaos. It is after his action that the creation assumes precise contours; light is separated from darkness, dry land from the sea, and everything takes on a definite shape.

Thus, it is the Holy Spirit who transforms the creation from chaos into cosmos, who makes it something beautiful, ordered, polished ("cosmos" comes from the same root as "cosmetic" and it means beautiful!), he makes a "world," in the double sense of this word. Science teaches us today that this process went on for billions of years, but the Bible -- with its simple and image-filled language -- wants to tell us that the slow evolution toward life and the present order of the world did not happen by chance, following blind material impulses. It followed, rather, a project that the Creator inserted in it from the beginning.

God's creative action is not limited to the initial instant; he is always in the act of creating. Applied to the Holy Spirit, this means that he is always the one who transforms chaos into cosmos, that is, he makes order out of disorder, harmony out of confusion, beauty out of deformity, youth out of age. This occurs on all levels: in the macrocosm as in the microcosm, that is, in the whole universe as in the individual person.

We must believe that, despite appearances, the Holy Spirit is working in the world and makes it progress. How many new discoveries, not only in the study of nature but also in the field of morality and social life! A text of Vatican II says that the Holy Spirit is at work in the evolution of the social order of the world ("Gaudium et Spes," 26). It is not only evil that grows but good does too, with the difference being that evil eliminates itself, ends with itself, while the good accumulates itself, remains. Certainly there is much chaos around us: moral, political, and social chaos. The world still has great need of the Spirit of God. For this reason we must not tire in invoking him with the words of the Psalm: "Send forth your Spirit, Lord, and renew the face of the earth!"

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