

A 'RIVER' DESCENDING FROM THE TEMPLE

RECOLLECTION – MAY 24

This recollection can be a preparation for the Feast of Pentecost (19 May) - and I propose to you a text from the AT that struck and inspired me greatly... One morning - I was still in Jerusalem - I was leaving the Old City through the Lions' Gate and took the road on the other side of the Kidron Valley. I was suddenly struck by the scene before my eyes: the high ramparts where once stood the TEMPLE... and below, the deep Kidron Valley... This view reminded me of Ezekiel's vision...

I propose to take Ezekiel's vision as the basic text for our recollection.¹

++ **Ez 47:1-12** - under the threshold of the Temple, water comes forth and flows in an easterly direction ... descending into the Jordan valley, and flowing into the Dead Sea, cleansing all other water. No, there are not just a few drops dropping down; no, this brook coming forth from the Temple becomes bigger and ever more powerful and becomes a river - a mighty river. And wherever this water passes, animals begin to live and flourish again... And on the banks of the river, on both sides, all kinds of fruit trees begin to grow; their foliage will not wither, and they will bear an abundance of fruit. New life appears wherever this river passes and flows...



A beautiful image for this Life that comes forth from God to us, into our world: the SON AND THE SPIRIT.

—>> *Let us stop here for a moment and try to 'see', to imagine, to contemplate this scenery... The Temple: the symbol of God. But God doesn't remain turned in on himself: he opens up, communicates, gives himself, ... gives generously, in abundance...*

♦ **JESUS: Jn 4:6-14** ♦ Jesus sits near the famous Well of Jacob. After a long dialogue with the Samaritan woman, who had come to draw water, Jesus speaks of the water that he will give; this water will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Jesus is this river (which the Holy Spirit will join) that flows down, flowing through our dry, sterile, fruitless world... - into our personal lives and our communities...

So, Jesus is, in a way, this River that flows down from the Temple to the lowest point, the 'Dead Sea' - death itself. And wherever Christ passes, he does good; he gives and awakens life; he brings forth fruit. The echo of Jesus' presence in Acts 10:38 says it well, "*Jesus went everywhere doing good...*". – '*The Kingdom of God is among you*'.

When he began his ministry, Jesus did not go up to Jerusalem, to the Temple, to begin his messianic activity there. Nor did he attach himself to a particular synagogue. Jesus claims the freedom of the Prophets; their way of being active everywhere, passing

through towns and villages. If Jesus had identified with the milieu of the Temple, he would never have been able to meet the sick, the possessed, the leper... sinners, tax collectors, foreigners, and this Samaritan woman... With Jesus passing through the villages, encountering people on the road, God no longer remains an experience of the past, but he becomes present – here and now: God is passing among us. And the proclamation of Jesus was not the repetition of a text of the past, but the Word of God alive now. Like the Prophets, Jesus often spoke in parables, suggesting this question at the end: *And you, what part do you play in this story?*

Yes, this water comes down from God and flows into our history, into our valleys, passing through our parched and barren land; and everything comes alive again. Christ descends to the lowest point - death - and turns it into Resurrection, into New Life.

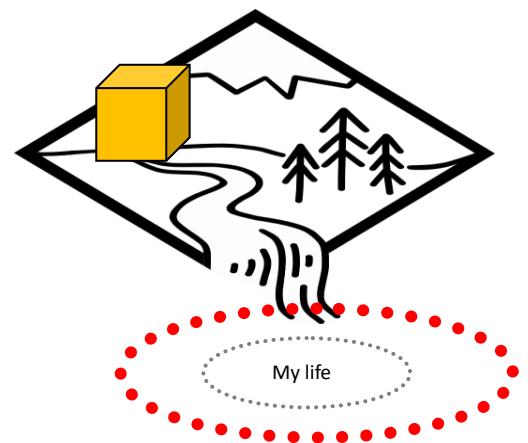
♦ **THE SPIRIT:** This river grows and becomes deeper and more powerful when the HOLY SPIRIT 'becomes part of this river flowing down from God. Gen 1:2 still speaks about «a *wind hovering over the waters*». But in Acts 2:1ff, the descent of the Spirit is described as the " *blowing of a violent wind*", and then as a "fire", «*tongues of fire*» - symbols describing this big and powerful river flowing into our world. The Spirit continues the work of Christ, expanding it and internalising it. He transforms us...

So, this great river – this new presence of God that descends and passes through our valleys, becomes a ‘powerful wind’, a new power of life; it compels us, moves us towards the Kingdom; it makes us live differently, more intensively, pushing us to open up, to love and forgive.... to let ourselves be transformed.

♦ **With the feast of PENTECOST approaching, I'm trying to see and discern how this powerful ‘river’, the Holy Spirit, comes into our world. And it becomes powerful; I try to see, to feel how it is working, how it is affecting my life, my activities and my relationships. Can this river flow freely down into my land, or do I divert it, even stop it – at times? How does it irrigate/transform /give new life to my soil, to my desert into which I sometimes tend to withdraw...?**

—>> **I give thanks for this river/ this powerful storm - the SPIRIT - who comes down into my life and who is discreetly at work in me... But I regret if my soil remains impenetrable and hard at times..., even diverting it elsewhere... How can I open more widely the door of my life to the Spirit?**

—>> **This river that comes from God, the SPIRIT, not**



only wants to pass through us, on our 'soil', but HE also wants to carry us along, move us, move us forward. Is my missionary vocation just something of the past, or am I still living it today?

- Do I allow myself to be carried away, to move, to move forward; and where is this 'current' taking me? And is my Missionary vocation just an event of the past; or: am I still living it today; and how?



≈ «Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom, lead Thou me on!» ≈ J.H. Newman.

♣ *There is no place where we can say the Spirit blows more than elsewhere...
There are only people who are **MORE OR LESS** open to this Spirit.*

♣ **The fruit of the Holy Spirit:** *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.* (Gal 5.22)

♣ **Our life/our body – a temple of the Holy Spirit:** *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body.* (1 Cor 6.19f)

¹ I'm presenting a rather special text - using the symbolic language of the parable and corresponding images for our recollection - inviting us to contemplate, to 'see with our heart', rather than to reflect intellectually...

Joe Buholzer, Fribourg, 2024

PRAYER OF ST AUGUSTINE

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
That my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
That I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
To defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
That I always may be holy.

Prayer - Dear Holy Spirit

Dear Holy Spirit,
Here I am before you
to let myself be moulded,
to let myself be led,
to let myself be loved.

Accept the offering of my whole being
and give me the grace
to love you more each day.
Teach me to let you do everything for me,
not to despise your inspirations,
not to resist you.
May this prayer today be the beginning
of a new intimacy with you.

Dominican Sisters of Estavayer le Lac

CARDINAL SAINT J.H. NEWMAN

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet;
I do not ask to see the distant scene;
one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that
Thou shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears, pride ruled my will;
Remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on.
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.