

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reading the Acts of the Apostles as they receive the Holy Spirit a summer story comes to my mind... I spent a week last summer in Taizé, next to the Oecumenical Community of Brothers, in a Religious summer camp for families in need. Children without parents, handicapped parents raising their child alone, very poor and neglected families without much hope for the future... yet spending great time together sharing tenderness and caring love with each other. In the afternoons we all were invited to a homemade theatre, performed by young volunteers of the camp. The theme of the short plays was the Acts of the Apostles.

I very much enjoyed when we arrived to the scene in which the Holy Spirit was gifted to all the disciples. We were in a huge openair tent, and on that special afternoon I realised large baskets hung above our heads. When this scene of the Spirit's pouring out upon all the disciples of Jesus from different nations, some of the young actors released the baskets, and a huge amount of tiny red paper spots were poured upon our heads symbolising the arrival of the Spirit. The children were shrieking out of joy while 'receiving the HOLY SPIRIT' upon them. They immediately started to collect the tiny little red paper spots.

Their simple joy seemed to be so realistic. They knew, they felt the real meaning of this symbolic act. It was stunning for me to see that suddenly all differences between us skin colour (Africans and Asians, Europeans), nationality, education, all disabilities immediately disappeared from the tent. The overwhelming joy of being gifted by the Spirit was manifested in the tent. The Spirit himself, flew around the tent together with the small red paper pieces.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit in this Biblical scene of the Acts, might have been a very similar overwhelming experience of joy. The Spirit was poured out not only on Jewish people, but people from different cultures even on pagans, that meant neglected, disabled, handicapped people of Jesus' time. Even Peter was aware of their differences from the chosen nation of God. Even he was reluctant to enter the house of Cornelius first, because of his paganism. But he could not overlook the fact that all the cultural and social difference between himself and the pagan soldier - disappeared when the God' Spirit arrived upon them. No distinctions of poorness or richness, no distinction of nationality - differences in skin colour, no Jewish or pagan existed any more. Instead there was the common experience of the overwhelming joy of the Holy Spirit. What a great reality!

This should be the general view of the Church. We all get the same Spirit from God, the same joy in which all our social, cultural, mental and other differences disappear. They do not count any more.

God is love and tenderness himself. He cannot give us anything else but Himself. That is why he sent his love for us in Jesus. His mission was to open up heaven (to release the baskets above our heads) and send us the Holy Spirit to unite us with his Father, with God's tenderness and love.

In that summer camp those children who realised that they collected too much of those paper spots, shared their 'treasure' with those who were not fast enough to collect more. It was amazing to see this sharing: the children got the real nature of God's joy: that multiplies itself. "Your joy should bear fruit, that will last." - says Jesus.

So, we also have to think about it in our lives: What can we share with each other? material goods? spiritual richness? mental or physical help? Simple joy is always present in our lives. But if we keep in our mind that it's worth to multiply it by sharing, then we have to call Jesus' Spirit to help us. By his attitude all our joys of life are multiplied and even poured upon others.

"Your joy be complete - bear fruit that will last" - says Jesus. My joy - says Jesus - comes from my connection with the heavenly Father and I share it with you: from now on you are my brothers and sisters.

Jesus gives the most by calling us brothers and sisters of himself - not servants anymore! He clearly shares his loving relationship with the Father. Think of it! What a great richness it is: he is directly connected to God who is pure Love, and he shares this directness, this loving relationship with his brothers and sisters... with us.

We have some joy in life, but permanent joy is possible only through Jesus. We can bear fruits by our acts, but bearing everlasting fruit is possible only through Jesus and with Jesus who connects us directly to the Father. Their joy of love if we enter their relationship as equals, - since we are offered this possibility - makes our joy complete and everlasting.

We might easily realise, that we are not enough for ourselves - everything we have is valuable but in itself is fragile and remains temporal. But if we are brave enough to receive the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Lord upon us, our joy our fruits and even our lives become eternal.

Amen.

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