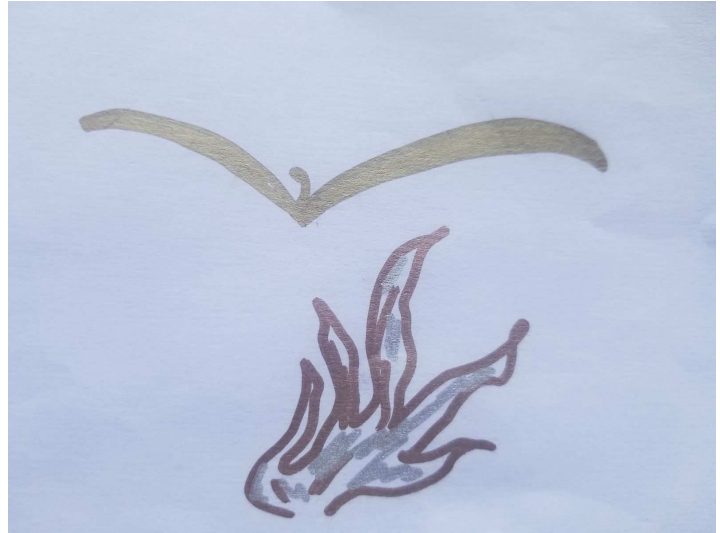


Holy Pentecost



The Gospel According to John 7:37-52; 8:12

"...On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now this He said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified..."

*In the lord have I hoped; how will you say to my soul; Flee unto the mountains like a sparrow?
For behold, the sinners have bent their bow, they have prepared arrows for the quiver, to shoot down in a moonless night the upright of heart" (Ps 10)*

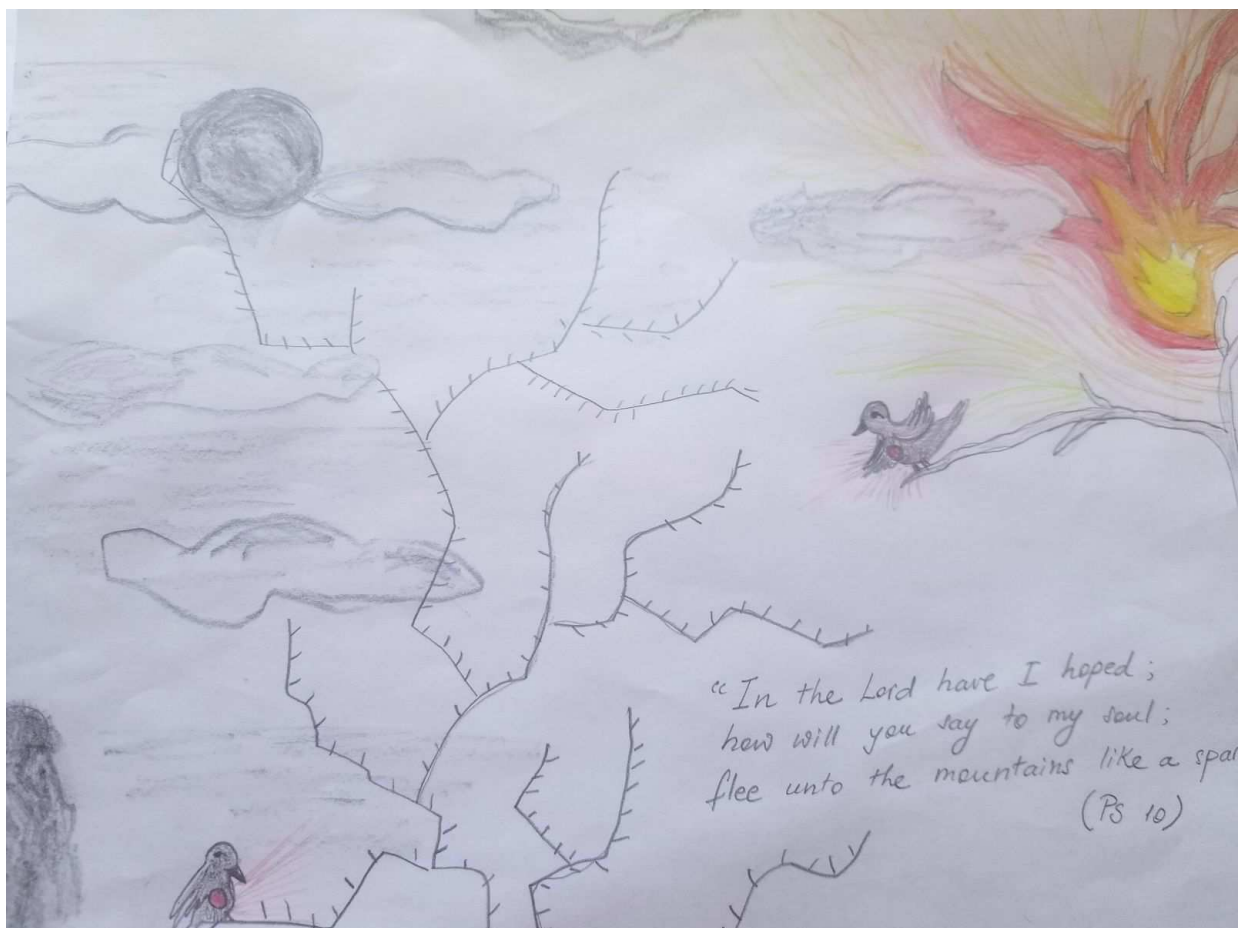
How many times have we felt weary and confused by the dryness of our soul? How many times have we felt there is no life to be found? We say we live in a broken community with broken lives who found no rest under the sky. And we tell the truth in saying that. We feel surrounded by a forest of thorns that scratch our body who tends to give up out of despair. And the soul is frightened like a sparrow ready to be shot by the hunter. It is only fear that keeps us alive. The same fear that dries up our soul because it is hiding and forgets to look for water. It does not dare to lift itself and go to the spring. Out of fear of the hunter and of the thorns that keep growing and scratching not only your body but also your soul. And then you realize that not only the body, but the soul as well can shed blood. So much so our humanity ended up being twisted. A growing pain, a growing despair. More harm for the body, more torments for the soul.

Every soul is looking for its freedom to meet his father, every bird caught in a trap is looking to stretch out its wings and fly towards the dawn. From the moonless night to leave behind the bloody moon (Joel 2).

But this is the thirst that welcomes the coming of the Holy Spirit. Every small and great wound in the body of our community was nothing else than a deeper desire for the Holy Spirit to be poured on us. For Him to pour Himself on us in abundance. With no measure for the weary soul that has been thirsting and thirsting for so long. Let us, being as despondent as we might be, dare to be drunk with the joy of the pouring down of the Holy Spirit.

There are times when you feel like all hope is lost. In our community it is not even difficult to feel like that. It shows you the real face of our time. It gives a glimpse of what our communal body is experiencing from within. It shows you the lost dignity of the church. The real body of Christ is deeply harmed, making you turn your cheek away from it. But it is all this thirst for richness that opens our souls to receive the pouring of the holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives us a new heart and a new spirit pours in us. This happens in a heart that is thirsty for His righteousness to be fleshed out in the world. To give life to a time that is perishing. It is not the world that needs to be renewed. Because the world is loved by the father. It is our time that is in need of sanctification so righteousness can shape its form. Time is looking for a body to carry its burden.



"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled" (Mt 5:6)

O God, ...my soul thirsts for you; my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water..." (Ps 63)

On Saturday, I was talking to D. about his views of the situation south of the border, that everyone is watching now. He is a candid soul with a healthy sense of humor and lots of common sense, which is a special treat these days. One can trust him with many things. He helped us a few months ago to hang some big icons on the walls. He was skilled and patient.

I listened to his thoughts because for him it is personal. I have to recognize that I was somehow more than curious. I felt a kind of new tension was circulating in Toronto before the weekend. Just by watching people's behaviour while waiting in line to enter a store. D. was really touched by what had happened and he revolted at the way people were treating him on the street. He was revolting against the violence and hypocrisy. A kind of injustice was asking to be quickly addressed. He thought something needed to change drastically. I was kind of surprised to see how much he was invested in the events. To a point that he pictured himself in the demonstration correcting through violence another violent act. I thought to myself: if a peace loving person with a gentle soul like D. feels that way, what can we expect of other people? He concluded that if something happened it would definitely be south of the border. Not in Canada. Here, everything will continue to be the same, with people smiling and being polite. We agreed that what best describes us is the image of a happy cemetery.

There are many wounds in our social body today. Nicely packed on the outside with a kind of eternal prosperity. Racism is one of them. We spoke within our community many times that all these wounds will never get better, on the contrary they will continue to get deeper and more painful. And somehow they could not be contained. One cannot speak about one without neglecting the other.

The movement of the Holy Spirit wakes up every human soul in order to reject any lack of divine justice, that can at times appear as social, economic or political and so on. The good desire is a fruit of His presence. He makes us desire any good thing and to reject any form of oppression. The oppression is real in our times. And it is to take ultimately the breath of life out of our body.

This is where the church is born. Where the tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit give us a new heart so the mercy of God is embodied in the life of the church who brings about and lives radically the good news of the resurrection, witnessing the forgiveness of God by embracing both the victim and the oppressor, by denouncing openly and publicly the act of oppression.

The church became from the very beginning the visible part of the kingdom of heaven within an earthly communal body. The hierarchy of the time was challenged at its very core because Christians lived according to the gospel and by doing so they lived differently than the people at

the time. We are called to live differently today, to live the gospel within every time, when “the days are evil” (Ephesians 5).

There are quite a few religious questions we might want to ask ourselves today. Should we dare utter them?

Could the church, by being exclusively nationalistic, lose its power in conveying a message of radical equality? By forgetting about the poor, taking from them the privileged seat in the church (see the first ecumenical council here), is it marginalizing those who are not profitable for the economic well being of the church community? Aren't we complying with the evil by: keeping quiet about the rate of abortion; about the increasing desire of the vulnerable to be assisted while taking their lives; by turning a blind eye on those who die on the streets of Toronto every year without a proper name; by pretending our children are not increasingly infected by drugs because we raised them up morally sufficient? Aren't we, in fact, condemning the innocent by omission?

By keeping quiet we become partners in crime with the rulers who know what they are doing and the purpose of it.

In the early Christian church, a slave was a presider at the liturgy (as father said so many times). Which could have meant a man who was a foreigner, with a different racial background, with no economic status, at times cheaper than an animal at the marketplace. With no right to live but only to serve and be abused. He was a presider at the liturgy. Where is he today within our community? So we get a better image of what we have become.

Today, as in the historical time, the Holy Spirit is coming and finds our church locked within itself for fear that somebody could steal from us what we don't possess anymore: mercy. We are in pretty bad shape. More than the apostles at the time. The Holy Spirit though is acting with dynamis. The more the thirst for richness is tormenting people's hearts the more He will fill our souls and change people's hearts. Let us open our doors and become alive. Otherwise the presence of the Holy Spirit today in the world will find us locked up on the internet, rehearsing the same melody again, and again and again.

“We stand there with those whose dignity has been denied. We locate ourselves with the poor and the powerless and the voiceless. At the edges, we join the easily despised and the readily left out. We stand with the demonized so that the demonizing will stop. We situate ourselves right next to the disposable so that the day will come when we stop throwing people away. The prophet Habakkuk writes, “The vision still has its time, presses onto fulfillment and it will not disappoint . . . and if it delays, wait for it [2:3].” (fr Roberto)

Oikos.

Speedy and constant consolation give us, Your servants, O Jesus, when our spirits become despondent. Do not part from our souls when we are in trouble, nor be far from our minds when we are in peril. But draw near to us, draw near, O You who are everywhere. And as You are always with Your Apostles, so also unite yourself to us who long for You the Compassionate; so that united to You we may extol and glorify Your all-holy Spirit.

During the vigil on Pentecost we heard St. Athanasius the great speaking about the love and unity of the Holy Trinity. And how nothing can be breached from outside.

St. Basil was talking about how the angels do the will of God by being carried by the Holy Spirit.

Man, who is the work of God's hands, did not receive perfectly God's invitation to sit at His table.

The righteousness of God was shared with man. Something from "outside" was welcomed within by man. Just to take the man away from Him who fills all things. We heard in the Oikos, the answer of man, who now is asking the Holy Spirit, who is everywhere present, to draw closer to our heart.

Even in our deepest fall, we were within the mercy of God. By not partaking fully of God's righteousness, we found ourselves alive within a trap, whose iron bars grew thicker and thicker, pressed down our body and soul more and more in order to violently break them apart from each other. To make them be lost and unable to reconcile.

Knowing the righteousness of God, the human soul, at times the most vulnerable one, dared to reach out in mercy. To practice a reflex of righteousness. To come out, and look for God. To go from self protection to charity. To look out for God and to meet our own kin and recognize within this encounter the misery of a human heart and the need to live eternally. But by coming out, the hunter had a heavy anchor to drop on those who dared to refuse the self isolation. The anchor of death, and the most vulnerable and the most innocent ones would be the first to challenge and to be taken away into the pit.

Within Christ's resurrection, the pit is empty and the signs of the resurrection are all over it. Now, the thirst for righteousness is filled by the Holy Spirit. The innocent ones are no longer a perfect victim but a witness of the encounter with each other within the mercy of God who calls each of us by name in forgiveness.

The oppressor continues to hunt us in our walk on the path of righteousness. But his perfect arm, death, is no longer present. When death is used, it brings to the world the witness of the innocent life, pouring more light on the light of light, Christ Himself. The one who is perfect, allows an innocent heart to shed more light on the shortness of death. Like an encounter between a firefly and the sun of righteousness. Where the sun shares some darkness space with the firefly so its light can be seen and enjoyed visibly.

There is something though that continues to harm our being by hijacking the first movement of the new heart. What the Holy Spirit brings to life in us is detoured by the hunter. The touch of the holy Spirit, instead of bringing comfort to us, makes us become itchy because we change the direction. We are misdirected to do so. It happens within our own life, when we see ahead a new journey, but we start on a wrong path. It happens at a larger scale, when a reaction against an act of violence ends up producing more violence or being taken prisoner by the rulers of this time.

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is...but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart." (from: Monday of the Holy Spirit St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 5:8-19)

Something new we do not not know yet

"We seek to tell each person this truth: they are exactly what God had in mind when God made them—and then we watch, from this privileged place, as people inhabit this truth. Nothing is the same again. No bullet can pierce this, no prison walls can keep this out. And death can't touch it—it is just that huge." (fr Roberto)

On Friday I talked for a little while to two people who are really sick. One of them has a terminal illness. Both of them were talking about something new in their life, that was ready to happen. The new was so present, and so real in their lives that it became more real than the illness itself. It was about something good that was about to happen.

"...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and you to walk in my statutes and you will keep my judgements and do them.."

What is this new heart and the new spirit? I have heard about it but today I am going to see it. Today I am going to wait for it. I know about a heart of stone, cold like a tomb, forgotten in a cemetery that is no more. I know about a heart that is closed and dry, a heart that you can use to kill a bird if you throw it with power. I know about a heart that is harmed by lack of trust and venom from our time. A heart that does not believe in miracles. A heart that recognizes the fear because it became its garment. I heard about a new heart. Today I am going to see it. So my soul would not fly away alone. But what about the spirit. I didn't know I had one, today I'll see only life ahead of me. For dead I was already and I knew not. Today I found out and I see only life ahead.

Laura was talking about receiving the love of the father. Do we open up to it? I missed having these discussions with people from our community, the poor and the volunteers and sometimes clergy altogether. Where the poor gently challenge us to take the gospel seriously. On Friday, we tried something similar. Only to hear Laura asking us if we really wanted to receive help from the father. Do we really want to open up? Young people say they are pretty independent and they get used to doing things by themselves. Laura said it is not about that. It is about opening up to Him. Do we want to do that? The poor are among us at the mission, the coming of the Holy Spirit will draw us closer to them. So our angels will see in heaven the face of the Father

"The Lord said, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. For the Son of man came to save the lost..."(from : Monday of the Holy Spirit The Gospel According to Matthew 18:10-20).