

SERMON 27: ON PENTECOST

1. *The Spirit of the Lord adorned the heavens.* Job 26:13

[Prothème] *It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father, who speaks in you.* Matthew 10:20. The words proposed in the second selection are taken from the Gospel of Matthew and are the words of the Lord that demonstrate the insufficiency of human weakness, lest we take our strengths for granted; they assert the influence of divine generosity, so we may have confidence in receiving its gifts. The presentation of the divine words does not come in any way from human strength, but rather from divine gifts. And for that reason the indigency or insufficiency of human weakness is mentioned, when it proposes: *It is not you who speak*; but the influence of divine generosity is noted when it adds: *but the Spirit of your Father, who speaks in you.* Dearly beloved, let us not be numbered among those who said: *We will exalt our tongue, our lips belong to us*;⁴⁶¹ let us with one voice ask the Lord, the giver of every good, that through his grace and piety, may take away our insufficiency and, according to the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:3: *No one is able to say Jesus is Lord unless in the Holy Spirit*, grant the influence of divine generosity, by whose mediation, we may be able to say and equally hear those things which are to the glory of almighty God and the consolation and grace of whoever hears. Amen.

⁴⁶¹ See Ps 11:5: "Who have said: we will exalt our tongue. Our lips are our own. Who is Lord over us?"

[Sermon] 2. *The Spirit of the Lord adorned the heavens.* The supreme artisan, the Holy Spirit, desirous to place the celestial manna and divine aroma of Christ's name in apostolic vessels,⁴⁶² first beautifully adorned them with celestial splendors on the day of Pentecost. Mother Church herself reflects upon the benefit bestowed on this day in the proposed verse, when it says: *The Spirit of the Lord adorned the heavens.* Certainly this verse describes the benefit today with an ordered threefold comparison: first, in regard to the effective principle with a personal name, when it says: *The Spirit of the Lord*; second, in regard to the receptive subject with the appropriate representation, when it adds: *heavens*; since through the heavens the apostles are designated or represented by reason of various noble properties; third, in regard to the intermediate act in the specific action, when it introduces: *adorned*; since the apostles were adorned specifically and eminently with celestial virtues and gifts.

3. It says therefore: *The Spirit of the Lord*, where it describes the benefit of today in regard to the effective principle. The Spirit, however, has three properties within him that are the principle and cause of the threefold gift, in which the entire benefit of today radically and essentially consists. For first there is infallible truth in the Holy Spirit;⁴⁶³ second there is liberal charity; third, invincible power. First, since the highest truth is in him, thus from him proceeds the splendor of faithful understanding that illuminates the cognitive power. Second, because the highest charity is in the Holy Spirit, thus from him

⁴⁶² Cf. Ex 16:33: "And Moses said to Aaron: Take a vessel and put manna into it, as much as a gomor can hold, and lay it up before the Lord to keep unto your generation." Cf. also 2 Cor 2:15: "For we are the aroma of Christ for God...."

⁴⁶³ On truth and the Holy Spirit, see *II Sent* d. 23, a. 2, dub. 3 (II, 548b-549a).

proceeds a love of benevolent usefulness that rectifies the affective power. Third, since the highest power is in the Holy Spirit, thus from him proceeds the vigor of virile constancy that strengthens the effective power. And these three are necessary for salvation for every situation, gender, and age; for no adult is in the state of salvation unless one has faithful intelligence in the intellect, benevolent charity in the affections, and final constancy in action. And these three things, through which a person is conformed to the Holy Trinity, flowed from this most principal source into the apostolic vessels for the first time today. They are certainly opposed to three evils which we incur due to the first sin, that is, the darkness of ignorance, the malignity of envy, and weakness of impotence.

4. First, since there is an infallible truth in the Holy Spirit, it produces the clarity of intelligible truth in the intellect against the darkness of ignorance. Whence John 16:13: *But when the Spirit of truth has come, he will teach you every truth.* Namely on this day the highest and most principal source and teacher, the Holy Spirit, who comes upon the apostles according to the promise of Christ, so perfectly and excellently illuminated them with the primal ray of truth that their intellect, aided by supernatural grace with every deiform image, similitude, and intelligible light, was elevated with the purest sight possible to the knowledge and contemplation of the deity. Was there not the highest understanding on this day among those, who with simple words, preached that Christ, the Son of God, was risen from death as the prophets had previously stated with obscure words and metaphorical parables and enigmatic figures? Who among us, I ask, taught them to say such things so plainly and manifestly? Perhaps it was

the art of fishing, or *flesh*, or *blood*?⁴⁶⁴ Certainly not, but it was the *Spirit* of the celestial *Father*, who was speaking in them.⁴⁶⁵ Without hesitation one must believe this in the truthful certitude that comes from the Holy Spirit, and not from the fables of old witches, the sophisms of the philosophers, and the illusions of the magicians, because this doctor is most skilled and tested in every capacity from the most ancient of time, such that no one can contradict him in doctrine, or suffer rejection from someone else, or be cut short by refutation, because he is unable to deceive or to be deceived.

5. Second, since there is a generous and invincible charity in the Holy Spirit, it produces a breadth of useful benevolence in the affections against the malignity of envy. Whence Romans 5:5 says: *The charity of God is poured out into your hearts through the Holy Spirit, who is given to us.* Charity, however, is poured out into our hearts when love, proceeding not only from the superficial exterior, but from the intimate depths of the heart, expands the affections and moves all the powers of the soul to love all the elect. O how far and wide has the charity of the apostles been diffused throughout the entire world; they who handed over their souls to death for the salvation of all the elect! But *since the iniquity of the world has abounded, the charity of many has grown cold*⁴⁶⁶ or tepid, the Apostle exhorts us the fervor of mutual love, when he says in Romans 12:10-11: *Love one another with fraternal*

⁴⁶⁴ See Matt 16:17: "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven." See also Book I, c. 13 n. 84 of *De Fide in Sancti Ambrosii Opera*, edited by Otto Faller; CSEL lxxviii/8 (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1962), 37: "The philosophers do not believe, but the fishermen do. The dialecticians do not believe, but the publicans do."

⁴⁶⁵ See Matt 10:20.

⁴⁶⁶ See Matt 24:12: "And because iniquity will abound, the charity of the many will grow cold."

charity, anticipating one another with honor. Be not slothful in zeal; be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

6. Third, since there is an invincible power in the Holy Spirit, it produces the capacity for vigor and constancy in effect against the debilitation of impotency. Whence Acts 1:8 says: *You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit who will come upon you, and you will be my witnesses.* Our Lord Jesus Christ, sending the apostles as combatants against the violence of tyrants and slyness of demons, wanted first to fortify them with gifts or spiritual weapons and reinforce them with the strength of the Holy Spirit. And because of this Psalm 32:6 says: *From the Spirit of his mouth all their strength.* Whence Gregory teaches: "The strength of the heavens is drawn from the Spirit, because they would not presume to oppose the powers of this world, unless the fortitude of the Holy Spirit had not reinforced them."⁴⁶⁷

7. Second, that benefit is described in regard to the receptive subject with the appropriate representation, when it says *heavens*. It is through the heavens, therefore, metaphorically speaking, that the apostles are designated by reason of fittingness and similitude in effect. For first, the heavens have an efficacious excess of influence; second, they have an observable refulgence of lights; third, the frightful echo of signs and portents.

8. First, they had an efficacious excess of good teachings in preaching, and this as a sign of perspicuous understanding. Whence Psalm 67:9 says: *The earth was moved, and the heavens dropped at the presence of the God of Sinai.* Namely today the *earth*, that is, of the worldly

⁴⁶⁷ See Homily 30 n. 7 in GGHG in CCSL cxli, 264. The citation is verbatim.

and of sinners, *was moved* to penitence, because from the *heavens*, that is, the apostles, the dew of divine eloquence dropped. And this was from the *presence of God*, because they did not possess this of themselves but rather from God, from whom every good comes; and this explanation is drawn from the Gloss.⁴⁶⁸ Something similar is said elsewhere in Psalm 18:2: *The heavens tell the glory of God*, without beginning and end in the incarnation; great, without diminution in the passion; and most pleasant, without distaste in the mission of the Holy Spirit.

9. Second, they had an observable refulgence of lights of practices and examples in conduct, and this as a sign of charity and benevolence. Whence Sirach 24:6 states: *I made that in the heavens there should arise light that never fails.* The honest conduct of the apostles is called by the name of refulgent celestial light, because just like celestial light, it is kept unmixed from all impurity and separated from the worldly so that through this it may illuminate the universe more clearly; so the celestial conduct of the apostles was sequestered from libidinal ardor and carnal impurity. And for this reason they were able to easily draw sinners and those darkened to the love of God to the light of faith, because "An example moves more than a word."⁴⁶⁹ A person learns from the accustomed sight of a holy man, from the use of speech, and from the example of work, in order to be inflamed for the love of goodness and illuminated by the light of truth. Because of this Genesis 15:5 is able to say of them: *Look up at heaven and number its stars if you are able*, as if to say: It is impossible for a moral human being to look up at heaven, that is, the heaven of the apostles, *and number its stars*, that is, the sevenfold graces, gifts, and beatitudes, with which

⁴⁶⁸ The critical edition refers to the Glossa Interlinearis.

⁴⁶⁹ See Homily 39 n. 10 of GGHG in CCSL cxli, 390.

which they were shining like lights in the world, containing an example of life;⁴⁷⁰ and you will see that rationally any person is incapable to number them.

10. Third, they had a frightful echo of miracles and portents in work, and this as a sign of power and constancy. Whence Psalm 143:5-6 says: *Bow down your heavens and descend, touch the mountains, and they will smoke. Send forth lightning and you will scatter them. Bow down your heavens*, that is, the contemplatives and celestial men to the people below through preaching; *and descend*, though the indwelling of illuminating grace; *touch the mountains*, that is, the proud, striking them with the fear of filial reverence; *and they will smoke*, through tearful contrition, so that all the vicious vapors depart; and then the lightning of signs and portents to confirm evangelical preaching, so that miracles confirm those who are moved by the efficacy of the word; and at least these portents may excite those whom preaching does not move to faith; for this reason *you will scatter them*, with spiritual and felicitous dispersion in regard to vices and sins, not that they may perish, but rather so that they might regain the life of grace.

11. Third, the present benefit is described in regard to the intermediate act in the specific action, when it adds: *adorned*. He specifically and eminently adorned the apostles with a threefold ornament: first, with the ornament of copious grace in regard to the unfailing supply of suffrages; second, with the ornament of dignified prelature in regard to presiding over subjects; and three, with the ornament of deiform glory in regard to the excellence of the rewards.

⁴⁷⁰ See Phil 2:15: "... For among these you shine like stars in the world."

12. First, he adorned them with the ornament of abundant grace in regard to the unfailing supply of intercessions. Whence Sirach 16:27 states: *He adorned their works forever, they have not hungered or labored, and they have not ceased from their works*. It is said that God so adorned their works forever, that is, the forceful deeds of the apostles, because due to the unfailing and continual influence, which they have in the Church militant thanks to the suffrages of their merits, great honor and reverence is shown to them by the Christian people; *they have not hungered*, because they were filled with such abundant grace, so that not only would it satiate them, but it would even overflow to others. And because of this, mother Church, supplies what her children lack from the paternal treasure of merits, since their fathers, the apostles, have not ceased *from their forceful works* in regard to efficacious intercessions.

13. Second, he adorned them with the ornament of dignified prelature in regard to presiding over subjects. Whence in every one of them that verse is fulfilled: *Have they made you a leader? Do not be lifted up*.⁴⁷¹ And it follows: *Receive the crown as an ornament of grace, and you will receive the honor of the congregation*.⁴⁷² Since the apostles did not exalt in pride, even though they were placed by the Holy Spirit as rulers over the entire world, to the contrary everyone of them was like one of the subjects. Therefore, they accepted the ornament of grace, which makes one pleasing; and for their advancement and salvation they received the *crown*, authority, and *the honor of the congregation*; they whose dignity and authority extend from the height of heaven to the depth of

⁴⁷¹ See Sir 32:1.

⁴⁷² See Sir 32:3.

hell; *they even have the power of closing heaven*⁴⁷³ and of binding and releasing the souls of human beings,⁴⁷⁴ *of stepping on serpents and scorpions*⁴⁷⁵ and restraining unclean spirits; for their tongues are like celestial keys that open and close the doors of heaven, and the salvation and languor of all, even of these unclean spirits, follows upon their command, which is an indication of the greatest power and dignity.

14. Third, he adorned them with the ornament of deiform glory in regard to the excellence of the rewards. And because of this that text from Sirach 45:14 is fitting for each one of them: *A golden crown upon his head, engraved with the sign of sanctity, glory and honor, adorned as a delight to the eyes.* By means of the golden crown placed on the head of every one of the apostles, inasmuch as it is *engraved with the sign of sanctity, glory, and honor*, the first ornament or robe of the soul is understood; but inasmuch as it *adorned as a delight to the eyes*, the robe of the body. The first robe or ornament of the soul consists in a threefold dowry, that is, clear vision, secure possession, and quiet enjoyment. The second robe or ornament of the body consists in a fourfold dowry, that is, agility, clarity, sublimity, and the inability to suffer. Whence Augustine says in *City of God*: "Every deformity, every tardiness, every infirmity will be removed from the bodies of the elect."⁴⁷⁶ This is what will be fulfilled when the *crown* of our humility will be wrapped with glory, and *adorned as a delight to the eyes*, because the eyes of those who look

⁴⁷³ See Rev 11:6: "These have power to close heaven, so that it will not rain during the days of their prophesying...."

⁴⁷⁴ See Matt 16:9.

⁴⁷⁵ See Luke 10:9.

⁴⁷⁶ Bonaventure has adapted Book XXII, c. 20 n. 3. See CCSL xl-viii, 841.

will delight. And the apostles had all these dowries in an excellent and singular manner. Let us ask the Lord, etc.