

Give me no rest (Is 62:1-7)

* Three or four days ago, when it was at the ninth hour of the morning, I heard my wife calling from the sunroom, *Paul, come here!* In a moment, I was there. Instantly, after entering the room, my eyes caught sunbeams glancing off the windows. I noticed rays of sun shining on the floor and on the ceiling. The bright light rolled over the green leaves of the potted plants as well as within the green eyes of my wife. I had a moment of affection for these shining and sparkling things, and my mood raised up to a cheerful state. What a wondrous epiphany hour, I thought, certainly the sun will shine down our street quite a while, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

* When considering a proper topic for this sermon, I found that (Isaiah 62:1-7) meets this noble requirement. This prophecy can be viewed as a message of encouragement and consolation given to a spiritual community in distress. Some time ago, Israel was lying on the ground stupefied with the wrath of God and exhausted with grief; but this shameful prostration and degradation have now come to an end according to the given promise. Being filled up with a great meaning this promise may concern the postexilic community in the time of Ezra as well as any local church today.

* Significantly, St. Luke's can be qualified as a local church *to whom (Is 62) may concern*. It is suitable for St. Luke's because, on one hand, it faced the same threat of total degradation and death as the postexilic community in Jerusalem; and on the other hand, God's passionate love is active now as never before in order to save and renew our community. Dear Friends, after one year of my shepherding of you is gone, one year is long enough in order to be known and to learn. Therefore, I acknowledge a fact that there is the beloved bride of Christ in St. Luke's; she is alive and active. Today, through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord sends his bride the message of encouragement and consolation, *You will no longer be called, "Abandoned," and your land will no longer be called "Desolate." Indeed, you will be called "My Delight is in Her," and your land "Married." For the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married to him,* (Isa 62:4). Upon hearing this message our mood raised up to a cheerful state, and surely the sun will shine down our street for quite a while. Beloved bride, keep your sparkling eyes upon the Lord and his promise of restoration!

* Now keeping in mind so great a blessing God prepared for this congregation, let's praise Him and ask Him for a clear vision of our primary task. We pray, O God, rich in grace! We exalt and give thanks to You for the salvation You prepared for this congregation. We thank you for the message You sent us today through the prophet Isaiah. Strengthen our faith so that by believing in Your Word we may have the joy of seeing the restoration of St. Luke to its golden age. Let us see the salvation You prepared for our congregation. Grant that we may not be put to shame in our beliefs and hope.

Save us in true faith until our blessed end so that we may die in peace and wait in peace at the appointed time for our full restoration to your glorious body. Amen

* At first, we need again to hear the message from Isaiah, but this time it comes to us in an unveiling way. Actually, the message takes its beginning from v.10 of the previous chapter 61 and its end is found in (ch.62, v. 7). The scholars recognized this passage as the Song of the Anointed One, Messiah, who testifies of his personal commitment. The fulfillment of this commitment is expected within a certain period.

* Significantly, the Messiah will not rest until he will save her; *and then, her victory shines like a torch in the night*, (v.1). The feminine pronoun 'her' points to Jerusalem, and in the light of the New Testament's revelation her/ she stands for the Church of Christ. Her victory is an outcome of Christ's victory. Her beauties will appear in possession of God's beauty and that is righteousness and glory. God's people will be recognized by acts of righteousness that Isaiah compares with *a beautiful crown for the Lord*, (v.3). The people of the church will be called by the name of the Anointed One, the 'Christians.' The Lord will be among his people, it says, longer will you be called 'Forsaken,'(v.4).

* Next in significance is found in (v.5). *As a young man marries a young woman, so your sons will marry you*. The notion of sons marrying a mother is resolved if we understand that a young woman stands for the Church and her sons are men who will be born through the Means of Grace given to the Church. These men will be assigned by the Lord for shepherding at local churches. Such illustrations as a pastor as a bridegroom and a congregation as a bride are common but it is a temporarily union. Like a young man marrying a virgin, so the 'shepherd-pastor' will occupy and possess a local church. Thereby this Church will then no longer be desolate and forsaken but will be served according to its spiritual needs, for Christ's sake, (2Co 11:2), who alone is her real Husband. When Christ receives the Church as his bride and rejoices at the multitude of her sons and daughters, then truly the Church is blessed.

* Dear Friends, it does not surprise us that the prophetic writings frequently represent the mutual love between God and his people under the marital imageries that might provoke sexual sensations. However, it must be said that the Scriptural language in the matter of love between God and his flock suggests the high ethical and religious way of thinking as can be seen in the teaching of our Lord and his apostles, (Eph 5:22-33; Rev 19:7-9; Rev 21:2, Rev 21:9). For instance, in (2Co 11:2) Paul says, *I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ*.

* Now thinking again over Isaiah's prophecy, we can easily apply it to our congregation. Just ask yourselves. Does Christ forsake St. Luke's if there is not found his beloved bride? Doesn't Christ long for the restoration of his beloved bride to her golden age? Is Christ too weak to save his beloved church from oppressors? The answers are here, they are in Isaiah's prophecy.

You will no longer be called, "Abandoned," and your land will no longer be called "Desolate." Indeed, you will be called "My Delight is in Her," and your land "Married." For the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married to him, (Isa 62:4). Beloved of the Lord, don't harden your hearts but act as it says through the prophet! Don't allow him to rest until he reestablishes Jerusalem, until he makes Jerusalem the pride of the earth, (Isa 62:7). Beloved, don't harden your hearts but believe as the Lord says! For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch, (Isa 62:1).

* It is still cold, because we are in the middle of the winter season, but spring can be already noticed!

Recently we've been in the Roselly Park; there we walked along the alley of the budding trees, and I've never seen the budding trees as a part of the frozen landscape. Similarly, the process of restoration in our church is already noticeable, though we are still the same in number. The restoration started after my arriving and serving you as a shepherd-pastor. Therefore, don't harden your hearts but believe as it says! For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, (Isa 62:5).

* There are some other visible signs of the restoration taking place in our church according to (Is 62); just open your eyes and find similarities between what is going in our church and Isaiah's message. *People of Jerusalem, go out of the city and build a road for your returning people! Prepare a highway; clear it of stones., (v.11).* Beloved didn't we cleanse our church and its facility from trash? Haven't we already fixed many things and made the sanctuary to look nice? Have we worked out the liturgical settings, and fixed the problem with acoustic system to make it sounds beautiful? On top of these as we prepare for the coming of the new flock, we set up the church's website in computer language as it was commanded by the prophet, *Put up a signal so that the nations can know, (v.11b).* We believe that our website will be popular among nations, and nations will come here. If we take a look at the statistics, you will see that 6% of visits at our website come from Russia. Doesn't that amaze us! Now, see the visible signs of restoration we observed and amaze again as well as believe. See, our Bridegroom is working on it.

* Beloved, the Lord wants us to pray to him constantly and diligently for the restoration our church, *O people of St. Luke's, don't be silent! Remind me what I promised to you! Don't let me forget my solemn promise! Give me no rest! (vv.6.7 paraphrase).*

* Finally my last remark, calls us to think over the Epiphany again. The Epiphany means a marvelous appearing of deity in the Man Jesus. By the same token Epiphany is a marvelous appearing of Christ's righteousness in his Bride. Beloved of the Lord, let Christ's righteousness continue to shine through you, and let the nations see your righteousness, and let all the kings see your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give to you, (Isa 62:2). Amen.