

A Kaleidoscope of Anticipations (Acts 1:12-26; 1Pet 4:12-19; 5:6-11; Joh 17:1-11)

* Dear Friends, this Sunday is special if it is thought in terms of the realities of time between Jesus' Ascension and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Presumably on that Sunday Matthias was added to the eleven apostles in place of Judas – the betrayer. Yet, the significance of time was also attested to certain kinds of anticipation. The first one set off a ceaseless joy to the disciples on hearing the promise, *for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now*, (Act 1:5). And the next is linked to the upcoming judgment with reference to the setting up God's Kingdom. Before the ascension, the disciples asked Jesus, *"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (Act 1:6). This question originated from the common belief in God's judgment over the rebellious nations who rejected the Kingdom. The solemn promise to judge the living and the dead became part of the apostolic confession, and it causes a sense of considerable awe in the hearts of the disciples, (1Pet 4:18). From this we conclude that the Sunday before Pentecost was special in terms of the apostles' anticipation of the coming of the Holy Spirit for the successful work of proclamation.

* With reference to us, who were already baptized by the Spirit and the Water, the first solemn promise is no more a matter of a joyful anticipation but is history instead. However we still anticipate something that depends upon our insights (Joe 2:28), or external signs, (Mat 24:32). Saying generally, they are anticipations of God's power through us and the manifestation of God's power over our adversaries, *not many days from now*, said Jesus, (Acts 1:5b). And the Spirit of the Lord would be poured out upon the elect; and the glory of the Lord would be seen, all in good time.

* When we prayerfully consider in what way the first reading of the day (Acts 1:12-26) should be valuable for this Last Sunday of Easter, we come across a significant remark concerning the apostolic mandate. It refers to the newly elected apostle Matthias who must become a witness of Jesus' resurrection with the rest of the apostles! (v.22). But in this instance we wish you to focus not on Matthias' personalities rather on the result of his election. The result was significant, the joyful anticipation of Jesus coming back by Spirit were fulfilled with a following eruption into a river of unceasing joy experienced by the apostles and these converted to Christ; similar to what was said by the prophet, *... my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced ...*, (Act 2:26).

* Coming back to the apostles' anticipations, we wish to break down the next one, which is the awe – anticipation pertaining to God's judgment. In this instance, it had to do with the people who plotted against the life of Jesus, like Judas Iscariot, for example. As to Judas, our text provides the fearful information broadcast among the fellow citizens of Jerusalem, (vv.18,19). According to Matthew, Judas committed

suicide by hanging (Mat 27:5) on a tree. When the news was heard, the awe - anticipation received its first realization. Not so long after the memorial events of Pentecost, the apostles heard other news; Pontius Pilate was sentenced by the emperor Tiberius to the most disgraceful death. It says, *on hearing the emperor's verdict, Pilate killed himself with his own knife*, ("Death of Pilate," the apocryphal writing). Next, they heard about Herod Antipas' outcome. As we know, he gave an order to behead John the Baptist and mocked Jesus as well, and it was said that the emperor Caligula sent him to exile where he died. Next, the apostles heard about Herod Agrippa. This man was known by his cruelty; he ordered to behead the apostle James (Act 12:2), and he severely persecuted the Church in Jerusalem; it says that an angel of the Lord struck him to death, (Act 12:23). What we want to mention last is the priestly party of Jesus' oppressors. The apostles and the rest of the world heard about the fatal outcome of the Jewish war with the Romans. It says that the City and the Temple were to be leveled to the ground in 70 AD, the great number of Jews were killed including the priestly party, (Flavius Josephus - *The Jewish War*). When we read about this matter from the old sources, or when we are given to see others doomed to unhappiness in our present time, then our awe - anticipation turns to the fear of God. *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest*, (Rev 15:4; Act 5:11).

* When we prayerfully consider the anticipations preceding the Day of Pentecost, we discover the third one that belonged to the mature Christians, in this case as Peter and who follow him. When the persecution arose about the Church in Jerusalem, it didn't surprise Peter; what is more, he expected it, (Joh 21:18, 19). At the same time the immature Christians were surprised. This instance is found in the second reading for today (1Pet 4:12-19; 5:6-11). It says, *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you*, (v.12). When Peter mentions this, he might recall Jesus' words on this matter (Mat 10:17,18) or his own experiences, (Act 12:3,4). *Beware of men*, said Jesus, *for they (the opponents) will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles*. As usual, the immature brothers preoccupied themselves with the triumphant concept of Christianity as to cast out demons, to pick up serpents, and to recover the sick by laying on of their hands, (Mar 16:17,18). That is right, all things are yours, said Paul (1Co 3:21), including painful trials, persecutions, and insults for Christ's sake, said Peter, (vv. 12,13). Therefore, with Paul and Peter we may say confidently, that in addition to the joyful and awe - anticipations, Christians should be prepared to participate in the innocent suffering of Christ, (v.13).

* Now, in the course of all given remarks, we discern the woods for the trees that is the threefold anticipation of Pentecost: joy, awe, and martyrdom. Before Jesus' ascended the throne,

he prayed to the Father so that his disciples would lack for nothing. Dear Friends, all these things are ours, even though we might not experience all of them in the past, but it is fine, because Jesus made those who believe him the participants of his glory on the account of his merits. In other words, he gave us all what belongs to him, even his suffering on the cross. So that everyone who believes in Him can taste the benefits of being Jesus' disciple, - that is sometimes to be overjoyed by the Holy Spirit; sometimes to be filled with awe on seeing God's judgments; and sometimes to be able to hold up one's head before his foes. And it is awesome! Dear Friends, if you don't believe our witness but rest upon your own experiences, it is also fine.

Later the Word and the Spirit will accomplish the work of our salvation. At that final stage, we'll come to the knowledge of truth, and will be all as the one body, in mind, in heart and in the Spirit, (Joh 17:11).

In this instance, it is God's anticipation, not ours, but it is the topic for the next sermon.

Beloved of the Lord, let's not be surprised as the immature, instead, rejoice of your time because it is also colored with the certain anticipations, not many days from now, and we'll see His glory.

Amen.