

THE EIGHTH FLOWER: COMING OUT OF THE SHELL

I am now armed with your gifts, O Lord, beautified by your flowers, purified and blessed by your grace. The others call me one of yours, one of your disciples. They know that I belong to you for I am working in your name and nurturing myself by your words.

Your flowers titivated me and engulfed me with the brilliance of your power. They transformed me. They enabled me to overcome my frailty, my fragility, my fear and my ignorance. They provided me with what I lack and what is needed for my new ministry.

The bouquet of flowers is now bestowed and received and has become one unique arrangement. Each flower complements and does not overpower the other. The harmony among the different flowers has enforced my belief and has channeled my efforts, thoughts and my reactions towards you. It has guided me to the ultimate act of love, in imitation of your earthly life, becoming a witness, a martyr, to your words.

The boldness of my witness created a schism in the family to which I belong. Many have witnessed the first martyrdom in your name; some have believed and accepted to follow you. Some envied these actions and began to persecute those who belong to you.¹

Again, out of fear, your community scattered² but they did not hide this time. They went out and preached.³ They gave witness to what they had seen and heard. And the newly ordained deacons followed the scattered young community. Are not they the servants who should serve the tables? Meanwhile your apostles remained in the city as the pillars of faith fearing neither persecution nor danger.

The deacons went out on their way into the world.⁴ This persecution gave them the true opportunity of becoming the first missionaries of the world. They emerged out of their shells and introduced Christ to the world.

Wow! Who knows God's wisdom? Who knows the mysterious work of God? Because I accepted the call of God and accepted to be a servant through His community, I was given the honor to become the protomartyr and the protopreacher to the world.

¹ Acts 8: 1.

² Ibid.

³ Acts 8: 4.

⁴ Acts 8: 5.

The Lord, through his messengers, began revealing directly to me what I should do. He wants me to move forward and to open up to others, regardless of their background, skin color or beliefs. He is sending me to their hearts, to their souls and to the ocean of their knowledge. He wants me to touch them by His word and illumine their thoughts. He wants me to heal their understanding so that they might adopt God's wisdom.

Yes, indeed, how could they understand the word of God if no one is guiding them?⁵ How will they be saved if no one is opening their eyes and ears to the saving words and acts of God?⁶ How will they be saved if they do not know who the Savior is?⁷ How can we blame them for their amazement in the magician's work?⁸

Now I understand the purpose of the creation and the meaning of "serving the tables." The table is the heavenly table. It is the table of the faith, the altar. My role, as your servant, is to go out into the whole world and proclaim your saving words, bringing the people to your Festal table. I should go out and call on anyone and everywhere.⁹ Salvation is not meant to be exclusive to me but inclusive to everyone because of God's mercy and grace. He is the only one who will accept and reject the attendees.¹⁰ But my responsibility towards the other is to invite him, make him hear and understand, then lead him to accept Jesus Christ as His savior and wait for him to ask to put on the robe¹¹ of purity, the robe of baptism, Jesus Christ¹². His understanding is essential to the endorsement of the faith and to become a servant of the Heavenly Holy table and not of his own earthly table.¹³

My crucial work lays here. It is to explain and to demonstrate to others, by word and by deed, my faith in you, so your table will be full. Here is where I can say that I am a true witness, a true martyr at your table.

⁵ Acts 8: 31.

⁶ Acts 8: 30.

⁷ Acts 8: 35.

⁸ Acts 8: 9-10.

⁹ Matthew 22: 9.

¹⁰ Matthew 22: 12.

¹¹ Matthew: 22: 12.

¹² Acts 8: 37.

¹³ Acts 8: 13.