

THE NINTH FLOWER: IN THY LIGHT WE SHALL SEE LIGHT

What a spectacular scene! The stoning to death of Stephen was a remarkable event. It did lead some to the Faith, the Way,¹ and some because of their blindness stayed away and continued their efforts to abolish and kill the faithful in order to wipe the Faith. Even though they saw Stephen's face as a face of an angel,² they were in complete darkness not to realize the Way in Jesus Christ.

Their eyes were open but in sin, in darkness; they didn't see the shining of the light from Stephens' face. Their ears were open but to their self voices not to hear God's voice thru the Prophets' voices proclaiming the incarnation of the Messiah and his resurrection. Their hearts were harder than the stones they threw without mercy at Stephen's body; they were shown and guided toward the Way but they did not follow it. Yes, O Lord, some of us are harder to get than others. Some of us are in need of a "Symeon,"³ a sign, a miracle to see your Light so that we may depart in peace.⁴ All of us are waiting for your call but when you give us the hint, when you call, when you mingle in and among us, we doubt you, we ignore you, we give false witness and we persecute you.

But even though, some of us resist and ignore your revelations, you always have a way leading them to the Way. Your ways may be different for each one of us but again, some of us will learn and follow your voice and some will overlook the signs and choose to stay in their shells. We are all a "chosen people" but only some will become the "chosen vessels"⁵ because they recognize the light and accept the grace of blindness and fall to the ground⁶ so that they may be guided by you to you.

¹ Acts 9: 2.

² Acts 6: 15.

³ Symeon means sign in Greek

⁴ There is a parallelism between Symeon and Saul's departure in peace. Symeon departed in peace when his eyes saw salvation in holding the Lord between his arms, and Saul departed in peace and therefore the Church, when he was struck by the Lord's Light on his way to Damascus. Symeon's departure in peace was the death, the departure from the earthly life, and Saul's departure in peace was death to his old man and following the Way of salvation.

⁵ Acts 9: 15.

⁶ Acts 9: 4.

We are always stumbling upon a paradox; two sorts of blindness although that our eyes are still open.⁷ One is due to our ego and the other because of a lack of intimacy with you. The first is because of our sin (pride) and the second because of our lack of humility to submit ourselves to your grace. Following the command of God is the key to open the right door leading either to condemnation or to God's salvation. It is the key to heal from the blindness of the law by removing the scales through the encounter with Jesus Christ in Baptism⁸ as John Chrysostom says: "This was more wonderful, that, with his eyes open, he did not see, which was just his [Paul] case in respect of the Law, until the name of Jesus Christ was put on him."⁹ Condemnation leads us to death and salvation raises us and transcends us. By choosing the door to salvation, we will be walking the path of your Way to the "Straight"¹⁰ street.

Even though I persecuted you and accepted you only at the eleventh hour, O my Lord, you gave me the same commandment as the ones who came at the first hour. Your alliance with the chosen vessels is the same at the first hour, right after your Ascension, and at the eleventh hour as well, on the road to Damascus.¹¹

You are always commanding me to "Arise" from my bed of infirmities, to get out of my shell and to become a witness, a martyr, fearing no persecution, no calamity, for your name's sake and for your glory. This command is the call to step on the Ladder that connects heaven and earth, the "Ladder of Virtues," the Straight Street. Arising from my slumber and my darkness is my only way up to you.

My conversion at the eleventh hour created some doubts¹² and wonders;¹³ doubts to the first-comers and wonders to those who stayed away. But your voice and your light are magnetizing me. I heed to become a witness to your Way and no one, not even my ego, will distract me from being a witness to your Epiphanies.

After the laying-on of hands of your disciple on me I was illumined by your Light, I noticed my darkness which is not the light I thought it was. In your Light I began to see clearer. The members of my body began to understand and work in harmony with each

⁷ Acts 9: 8.

⁸ Acts 9: 18.

⁹ *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, First series, Vol. XI, p. 130.

¹⁰ Acts 9: 11.

¹¹ Compare Acts 1: 8 & Acts 9: 15.

¹² Acts 9: 26.

¹³ Acts 9: 21.

other. My eyes are not blurred anymore. Now, they see the Light and they can make a distinction between true and false. Now, they can stand up and act according to your commandment and proclaim your Word to the world.

The laying of hands on me gave me the same order you commanded your disciples to go and preach the whole nation. The same gifts you bestowed on your disciples you have bestowed on me and now I am ready to go and heal the world by preaching your Word. Peter, the first-entrant to your tomb healed in your name and his act taught me that you are the action; it is you who work through me and who complete the action.

In your name O Lord every breath will arise, but we have to become open, humble, and obedient to your words and faithful to your Way. You are saying to every breath "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."¹⁴ Here I am ready; my eyes are opened and enlightened as "the lamp of the body, the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light."¹⁵

¹⁴ Matthew 11: 28.

¹⁵ Matthew 6: 22.