

THE SECOND FLOWER: POWER

“Few can doubt the transforming powers of the Christian faith. It was a personal encounter with Christ that changed a fanatic persecutor like Saul into a vigorous missionary of love renamed Paul.”¹

The color, the fragrance and the touch of your first flower, O my Lord, have revived my senses and awakened them from their deep slumber. They have enlightened my sight to look through earthly matters and see God's magnificent work. They have astonished me too with the smell of the true fragrance, the spirit of my prayers that are lifted up as incense.²

The first flower, courage, had a personal impact on my life. It allowed me to wait fervently for your second flower, your promise. I waited this time and I did not go to sleep like the unwise women³ who missed the Bridegroom nor did I hide myself denying you, like Peter, because of my fear.⁴ And, suddenly, a rushing mighty wind⁵ turned me upside down and made me look like a drunk at the third hour⁶ (9:00 AM)⁷ as I am drunk from a “new wine.”⁸ But how can I have a new wine while the harvest is not been all cultivated? The “exceeding vehemence of the Spirit,”⁹ allowed me, the illiterate, to speak up and raise my voice with confidence and declare in the plain air, and to all who were amazed from my transformation and mocked me, that this is the effects of the Holy Spirit.

This mighty wind that has filled the whole place, including my inner cells, has empowered me with tongues of fire¹⁰ igniting my memory and firing up my understanding by lifting up the veil of ignorance and misunderstanding. The tongue of

¹ Demetrios Constantellos in his article “Varying Encounters with God in the Christian Life in *Orthodox Synthesis, The Unity of Theological Thought*, Ed. Joseph J. Allen, (SVS Press, New York, 1981), p. 119.

² Psalm 140 (141): 2.

³ Matthew 25:1- 13.

⁴ Luke 22: 55-65.

⁵ Acts 2: 2.

⁶ Acts 2: 15.

⁷ The Orthodox Study Bible, commentary on verse 3:1

⁸ Acts 2:13.

⁹ *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. XI, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, p. 25

¹⁰ Acts 2: 3.

fire has enlightened my intellect and purified my senses after it kindled my longing desire that is waiting in emptiness for the pouring of your promised Holy Spirit on all flesh.¹¹ It allowed me to long and to look forward for the eighth day when you will return in your glory where my faith and my deeds will judge me,¹² but my salvation will still depend on your mercy.

Then, I felt a kind of power working within me, pursuing me to speak up about your mysteries and about your teachings, defending what my parents and my ancestors have taught me, talking about what is seen and what is not seen, speaking about the fulfillment of the prophecies and looking forward to understand and learn more.¹³

Your second flower has a different color and a different fragrance even a different touch and effect. This second flower has given me the effective power to transform my personal relationship with you. It has given me the power to convert others by telling them who you are, and feed them with your teachings, encouraging them to belong to you and to be united with you through the forgiveness of their sins by baptizing them in your name.¹⁴

This power has ignited those who are listening. It made them wonder and question how they can become believers. They accepted your teachings and they were baptized. It transmitted unto them the apostolic traditions that they kept steadfastly sharing with others their possessions and living together in prayers and breaking of bread. They became partakers of the same gift.¹⁵

I have now the courage and the power to go ahead and minister to the people proclaiming publicly that you are Jesus Christ the Savior. Now, I have the two flowers that I needed to fulfill your commandment of apostleship: "Go and baptize the world in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."¹⁶

But these two flowers have to be watered and nourished. Courage and power will diminish if they are not fuelled by prayers and communal gatherings and fellowship.¹⁷

They will lose their effectual operation if my personal achievements blind my vision and

¹¹ Acts 2: 17.

¹² Acts 2: 21.

¹³ Acts 2: 14-36.

¹⁴ Acts 2: 38.

¹⁵ Acts 37-45.

¹⁶ Matthew 28: 19.

¹⁷ Acts 2: 42.

start to fill my inner self with satisfaction rather than the Holy Spirit. Our apostleship is a ceaseless effort of purification and communal life by caring, loving and sharing what God has bestowed on us because all our possessions are from above; they are *“Thine own, [O Lord], of Thine own, we offer it unto Thee on behalf of all and for all.”*¹⁸

Here I am, O Lord, with two flowers praying and eating gladly in community, feeling your presence. I am assembled with the brethren praising your name and commemorating your life, remembering your Last Supper with us right before your passions where you commanded us to do the same in your memory.¹⁹ You are Eternal and likewise is your memory. So, the breaking of bread in your memory is not a mere incident that happened in the past but rather a living experience that is happening now in the present life, because you are not someone who came and went away, but you are the Alpha and the Omega.²⁰ You do not belong to a place and a time for you are the time and the life.

With the pouring of the Holy Spirit, I am ready now to take the lead and go out and preach in your name, putting myself in action and motion through the work and the guidance of the Holy Spirit who fills everything and dwells everywhere.²¹

¹⁸ The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and St. Basil the Great

¹⁹ Luke 22: 19

²⁰ Revelation 1: 8, 11; 21: 6 and 22: 13.

²¹ Chanted at Vespers of the Feast of Pentecost and read as the opening prayers of the most services of the Orthodox Church.