

THE TWELFTH FLOWER: FOR GOD'S GLORY

Yes, the Word of God is in action. The Holy Spirit is swirling and lifting up the minds and the hearts of all men guiding them to the "Way", to the "Straight" way to become Christians.

Even though the work of Light is in unceasing movement, the work of darkness is still there trying to infiltrate and reduce with horror the enthusiasm, courage and endeavors of the faithful. The work of darkness wants to overshadow the Light; it wants to kill it. It starts to seek the heads of the leaders with its sword to frighten the faithful and scatter them. But it forgot what happened after the martyrdom of Stephen. Isn't Antioch the fruit of that killing?¹

The work of darkness is planning for a spectacular event; Passover is approaching. What is better than delivering another head of the new Church in the same humiliating manner that they did to their king in the previous year? Is not for this reason that it captured Peter in the "Days of Unleavened Bread" and kept him in jail under "four squads of soldiers"?²

But, as in each time, the Church solidifies and gets strengthened when it trembles from tribulation. The prayers are lifted up intensively seeking support and guidance from the true Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. The Church puts its trust in Her Master for He is the deliverer and the Savior from all tribulation; He is the ultimate Wisdom and He knows what is better for His Church and the entire world. Fr. Alexander Elchaninov observes:

"Ignorance and sin are characteristic of isolated individuals. Only in the unity of the Church do we find these defects overcome. Man finds his true self in the Church alone; not in the helplessness of spiritual isolation but in the strength of his communion with his brothers and his Savior. The Church is a living organism, integrated by common love, forming an absolute unity in Christ of the living and the dead."³

¹ Acts 11: 26.

² Acts 12: 3.

³ *The Diary of a Russian Priest*, Alexander Elchaninov, (SVSPress, New York, 1982), p. 87.

The faithful kept in “constant prayer”⁴ asking nothing in specific, but praying. They submitted their whole body; soul, mind, heart, lips, hands, ears and eyes to the will of God. The prayers kept them unified and focused; they did not fear the actions of darkness around them.

Putting my trust unto you, O Lord, keeps the fear away from me. In the midst of my tribulation, you give me your peace that I may sleep and not worry. I am yours and in “Thy Light I shall see the light.” You are the Salvation; through your death, death is Life and the earthly life is a foretaste of the True Life.

You are always raising me from my tribulation and saving me. You are always sending me angels⁵ and messengers in one way or another, because I see myself lifted up unexpectedly, miraculously and mysteriously.⁶ You care the same for the people who were interceding for my salvation.⁷ I follow your orders as if I were caught up in a dream, in a vision.⁸ I submit myself to you willingly, placing all my labors and my worries on you. I was chained to my worries,⁹ but peacefully and without thinking I followed the hints that you provided me and then, I was released. I was saved.¹⁰

Rising up quickly and girding my self¹¹ from the bed of my infirmities, my tribulation and my jail, left behind me some unpleasant consequences to the general public. The guardians of darkness are left alone, asleep in their slumber, and they were put to death by the king of death.¹² Their death was the remaining proof of the action of Light that will not be overshadowed by the power of darkness and its chains as John Chrysostom describes it: “the consequence is, by the death of these men (the thing), is made manifest to all: both his wickedness is exposed to view, and (it is made clear that) the wonder (is) of God.”¹³

Yes, O Lord, my rising from my suffering, from my sin, from my slumber, from my tribulation have left my sin alone, my pleasures alone and my glory alone. They have to

⁴ Acts 12: 5.

⁵ Acts 12: 7.

⁶ Acts 12: 9.

⁷ Acts 12: 12-16.

⁸ Acts 12: 9.

⁹ Acts 12: 6.

¹⁰ Acts 12: 10.

¹¹ Acts 12: 8-9.

¹² Acts 12: 18.

¹³ *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, First series, Vol. XI, p. 174.

die. The power of darkness will kill them for I am delivered into the Light, into a new "Way."

The chains should stay visible to my eyes reminding me where and how I was. This remembrance will allow me to focus and not to fall into deep slumber. If I do, I am assured that I can always arise if I submit myself willingly to God's mercy and through the intercession of the Church and its support.

There is always a lesson for me in every action in life because each action is a revelation of God. It is His Epiphany. I should always be attentive, keeping vigil and ready. God's work is an unceasing movement of grace, mercy and love. I always should be in a state of grace, mercy and love to capture these blessings. The angel of God struck an almighty king¹⁴ because he considered himself God and because he listened to the voice of his own glory. Is not this a lesson to me even though I am a disciple and a laborer in the field of God?

How many voices are crying and praising my work and my deeds? How many voices are crying and proclaiming that my words are the words of wisdom? How many eyes are seeing in me a righteous person, a person of virtue, piety and humility?

Yes, even this is true, but there is something wrong. What lesson should I learn from the striking of Herod to death when he proclaimed that he is god while Jesus proclaimed the same thing and was resurrected? The lesson resides in my acceptance of these acclamations as mine when I consider myself as above the others and I become a god separated from God. The lesson resides in giving myself the glory that is due only to God the Creator; my orations, my deeds, my ministry have to reflect God's glory and they are done for God's glory only.

Yes, indeed, I learned a big lesson, which I was taught many times before. The Word of God is an unceasing revelation and revisits me in various situations and aspects for I am weak and vulnerable to fall in the pit of sin. He reminds me so often that He is the True God, and because of that, He was not struck by the angel. He attributed to Himself what really He is. All honor and worship is due to Him.

¹⁴ Acts 12: 23.