



CONGREGAZIONE DELLO SPIRITO SANTO
CLIVO DI CINNA, 195 - 00136 ROMA, ITALIA



HOLY SPIRIT, Life in the Spirit

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LIBERMANN NOVENA 2016



DAY ONE : The Family a Domestic Church Animated by The Holy Spirit

The Word of God: - Eph. 4: 1 - 6.

I, the prisoner in the Lord, implore you therefore to lead a life worthy of your vocation. Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into the one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all.

Official Texts: (*Africae Munus no.43*)

The Family is in fact the special place, for the learning and the practice of a culture of pardon, peace and reconciliation. "In a healthy family life, are experienced certain fundamental composites of peace: namely, justice and love between brothers and sisters, the function of authority manifested by the parents, and affectionate service towards the weaker members whether because they are small, sick or aged. There is also shown mutual help when faced with the necessities of life, and the readiness to welcome one another, and if necessary, to pardon each other. This is why we can say that the Family is the first and irreplaceable teacher of peace." Because of the capital importance of the Family, and in view of the dangers which bear upon this institution, for example, the distortion of the idea of marriage and of the Family itself, the devaluation of maternity, and the banality of abortion, the ease of getting a divorce and the relativism of a "new ethic", the Family needs to be protected and defended, so that it can bestow on society at large the service which is expected of it, which is to give to the society in general men and women able to edify the social fabric with peace and harmony.

Libermann Text : (*To his brother and sister-in-law, Rennes 1837*)

If you are all hot and bothered, and think only of getting for your dear children a more brilliant existence according to the views of the world, what will that achieve apart from filling their heads with mundane ideas, and prevent you from taking the care necessary for making them holy? Even worse, you yourselves will be going backwards on the road towards perfection that you have already started to follow.

Do not be concerned about their worldly advancement. They are not *your* children: they are in fact, as you well know, the children of God. Their Heavenly Father knows well what they need, and he will look after them in every way necessary. Let him act as he pleases, and trust in him. Leave him entirely to take care of your dear children. You are in fact only their guides and teachers, helping to make them worthy children of God, capable of entering one day into the possession of his Kingdom. Set to work peacefully to look after this your family which in fact belongs to God, but do it without undue concern and with total abandonment to your Heavenly Father, who is at the same time the Father of your dear children. If you go about things too urgently and trouble yourselves over much, and if you want too impatiently their temporal prosperity, must we not fear that you are doing all of this because of ambition and out of too much appreciation for worldly goods? (*Lettres Spirituelles, 1. pp. 373 - 374*).

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, we praise you! You revealed to our ancestors the dignity of the Family and of Marriage. Come and help us, so that our Families can become true sanctuaries of life. Amen.

DAY TWO : The Church, an Assembly of Differences animated by the Holy Spirit

The Word of God: (*Acts 2. 1 - 8*)

When Passover day came round, they had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech.

Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, each one bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely' they said ' all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language?'

Official Texts: (*Lumen Fidei, no. 37*)

When he was addressing the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul used only the following two images. On the one hand he said, "But as we have the same spirit of faith that is mentioned in scripture - *I believed, and therefore I spoke* - we too believe and therefore we too speak". (2 Cor. 4. 13) The word we have received evokes a response, namely proclamation, and in this way it resonates for other people, inviting them to believe. On the other hand Saint Paul also refers to himself as being a light: "And we with our unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, all grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect" (2 Cor. 3. 18). St. Paul is here talking of a light which is reflected from face to face, in the same way that Moses carried in his face the reflection of the glory of God after having spoken with him: "(God) has shone in our minds to radiate the light of the knowledge of God's glory, the glory on the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4. 6). The light of Christ shines as though on a mirror, in the face of every Christian, and thus it spreads down through the ages and reaches even ourselves. In this way we also can participate in this vision and reflect the light we have received onto others, as in the Paschal liturgy the light of the candle sets fire to every other candle in the church. Faith is transmitted, in a manner of speaking, by personal contact, as a flame ignites other things. Christians, despite their poverty, sow a grain of seed which is so fecund that it becomes a large tree capable of filling the world with its fruits.

Libermann Text: (*Letter to Schwindenhammer, 1842*)

The only thing we need to do, the main thing to which our souls must apply themselves, consists in being disposed, always by the all powerful help of divine grace which is in us, a power which we have received through the mercy of our good Master, to follow the movements and impressions of the Divine Spirit within us. He wishes to be the soul of our souls. It is up to us to make him also the absolute Master of our poor souls, so that he can communicate to us his life and his activity. Let him act in us, in the same way as our bodies allow our souls to act in them: our souls stir us to actions which appear useful to them, and according as they decide. (*N.D. III, p.102*)

PRAYER:

O Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, I praise you! Remain the breath of innovation which propels the ship which is the Church. Help her to proceed onwards in spite of contrary and violent winds. Give your Church the assurance she needs, faced as she is with new challenges concerning Evangelisation. Amen.

DAY THREE : The Holy Spirit, the Power behind the Common Mission

The Word of God: - (1 Cor. 12. 4 - 13)

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the gift of preaching instruction given him by the same Spirit; and another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit; another again the gift of healing through this one Spirit; one, the power of miracles; another, prophecy; another the gift of recognising spirits; another the gift of tongues and another the ability to interpret them. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses.

Just as the human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.

Official Texts: (Ecclesia in Africa No.61)

Every culture needs to be transformed by the Gospel values in the light of the Paschal Mystery. It is by considering the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption that we must discern the values and anti-values of different cultures. Just as the Word of God came to be like us in every way, apart from sin, so the inculturation of the Good News brings to their integrity all authentic human values, purifying them from sin and bringing out in this way their full meaning.

Inculturation has also a deep connection with the mystery of Pentecost. Thanks to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and of his activity which unifies gifts and talents, all people on earth, by entering the Church, live out a new Pentecost. Each nation does this by professing in their particular language the unique belief in Jesus Christ, and by proclaiming the marvels which the Lord has done for them. The Spirit, who on the natural plane is the first source of wisdom in all peoples, guides the Church, by his supernatural light, towards the knowledge of the complete Truth.

Libermann Text: (Letter to the Community of Dakar and Gabon, 1847)

Examine everything in the spirit of Jesus Christ, unimpeded by any prejudices or previous ideas. Then, filled and animated by the charity of God and the pure zeal which his Spirit gives you ... be towards the Blacks as servants are towards their masters, respecting their customs, their attitudes, their ways of doing things. You will act like this in order to perfect, sanctify and indeed raise them up from their baseness, in order to make little by little, and in the long term, a people of God. This is what St. Paul meant when he said we must be all things to all people, so as to thus gain them all for Jesus Christ. (ND IX p.330)

Prayer

Praise be to you. O Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son! Bring about that all your children may work, each according to their particular vocation, for the salvation of all people and of the world, to the greater glory of the Father. Amen.

D A Y F O U R : IT (Information Technology), the New Areopagus, Signs of the Times

The Word of God: *(Acts 17. 22 - 27;)*

So Paul stood before the whole Council of the Areopagus and made this speech: 'Men of Athens. I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all religious matters, because I noticed, as I strolled round admiring your sacred monuments , that you had an altar inscribed: To An Unknown God. Well, the God whom I proclaim is in fact the one whom you already worship, without knowing it.

Since the God who made the world and everything in it is himself Lord of heaven and earth, he does not make his home in shrines made by human hands. Nor is he dependent on anything that human hands can do for him, since he can never be in need of anything; on the contrary, it is he who gives everything - including life and breath - to everyone. From one single stock he not only created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth, but he decreed how long each nation should flourish and what the boundaries of its territory should be. And he did this so that all nations might seek the deity and, by feeling their way towards him, succeed in finding him. Yet in fact he is not far from any of us.'

Official Texts: *(Africae Munus, No.145)*

Of course the Church must have a presence in the Mass Media, so that the IT may not only be a instrument for the spread of the Gospel, but also a tool for the formation of the people of Africa, for reconciliation in the truth, and for the promotion of Justice and Peace. For these reasons, a solid formation for journalists regarding ethics and respect for truth, will help them to avoid being attracted to what is sensational, as well as protecting them from the temptation to manipulate information, or from the desire to become rich too quickly.

Would that Christian journalists had no fear of showing their Faith! How proud in the good sense they should be! It is good equally to encourage the presence and activity of the Lay Faithful who are competent in the world of public and private communications. Thus they become the yeast in the dough. They will continue to witness to the positive and constructive benefits which the teaching of Christ and his Church offer the world.

Libermann Text: *(Letter to Fr. Gamon, 1848)*

We must continually remember that we are not now in an order of things which is already past. The problem with the clergy in recent years is that they have remained stuck in the ideas of the past. The world has changed and our human enemies are busy repositioning their artillery in new places to suit today, while we cling on to what has gone before! We must catch up with them, whilst always holding on to the spirit of the Gospel. We must attack this artillery in its new positions and not go on looking for it in places where it is no longer to be found. Wanting to cling onto the old days and sticking to the customs and spirit of bygone times will make all our efforts worthless and the enemy will reinforce itself in the new order of things. So let us welcome the new ways with openness and simplicity, bringing to them the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, we will sanctify the world and the world will join itself to us. *(ND X p151; A Spiritan Anthology pp.153 - 154)*

Prayer:

Praise to you, O Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son! Give to those who use the Mass Media the grace of putting IT at the service of Truth and Beauty, so that humanity may benefit, instead of being enslaved and degraded by IT. Amen.

DAY FIVE: Power and Authority as Service in the Holy Spirit

The Word of God: *(Mt. 20. 24 - 28)*

When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Official Texts: *(Africae munus, no. 81)*

A major instrument at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace, can be political institutions, of which the essential duty is the putting in place and the management of a just Social Order. This Order in its turn is for the service of "the vocation to communion among persons". To make such an ideal a fact, the Church in Africa must contribute to the building up of society in collaboration with government authorities and public and private institutions engaged in the construction of the Common Good. Traditional chiefs can also contribute in a very positive way to good governance. The Church, for its part, works to promote in itself and in society at large a culture concerned with the primacy of right. For example, elections constitute a special place of the expression of the political choice of a nation, and are a sign of legitimacy for the exercise of power. They are a privileged moment for a political and public debate which should be both healthy and calm, characterised by respect for different opinions and for different political groups. Encouraging a good development of the electoral system will support and foster a real and active participation on the part of the citizens in political and social life. Lack of respect for the National Constitution, of law, and of the verdict from the polls, in the case of a free, equitable and transparent election, shows a grave weakness in governance and will signify a lack of competence in the management of public affairs.

Libermann Text : *(Letter to Fr. Gamon, 1848)*

Another category of men who have been blown away by this tempest is that middle-class aristocracy which make up the legal system; they have done great harm to the Church, refusing her any semblance of justice and sweeping aside the interests of the poor. These men have sacrificed their souls and their country for their wretched egoism and completely personal profit. The anger of God, or rather his justice, has swept aside, in its turn, these puffed up monsters. You ask me if the clergy should take part in the elections. I believe they should; they owe it to God, to the Church and to France, and tomorrow morning, I am going to have myself put on the voting lists along with all those of us who are eligible. If every priest in France does the same and encourages others to do likewise to ensure a good choice for the Legislature of the Republic, then we will have a solid Constitution and a sound Executive. What blessings will ensue! *(ND X, p.148; A Spiritan Anthology, pp.152 - 153).*

Prayer:

Praise to you, O Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. You teach us that power and authority are there for the Common Good. Give to all peoples of the world leaders who will be diligent servants for humanity's sake. Amen.

D A Y S I X: The Spirit gives Life - The Protection of the Environment for the New Creation.

The Word of God: *(Gen. 9. 1 - 3)*

God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth. Be the terror and the dread of all the wild beasts and all the birds of heaven, of everything that crawls on the ground and all the fish of the sea; they are handed over to you. Every living and crawling thing shall provide food for you, no less than the foliage of plants. I give you everything.

Official Texts: *(Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel: No.262)*

Spirit filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. Mystical notions without a solid social and missionary outreach are of no help to evangelization, nor are dissertations or social or pastoral practices which lack a spirituality which can change hearts. These unilateral and incomplete proposals only reach a few groups and prove incapable of radiating beyond them because they curtail the Gospel. What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity. Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervour dies out. The Church urgently needs the deep breath of prayer, and to my great joy groups devoted to prayer and intercession, the prayerful reading of God's word and the perpetual adoration of the Eucharist are growing at every level of ecclesial life.

Libermann Text: *(Letter to the Community of Dakar and Goree, 1846)*

Keep faithfully to the Rules, even the least important, but especially be faithful to prayer and to your monthly and annual retreats. It costs a certain amount of effort to remain in prayer for a considerable time, preoccupied as you are, by so many other thoughts during the entire day. These thoughts come to us even during meditation. The end of our prayer approaches, and we consider that we are wasting one hour every day. We think we could be better employed during that hour with doing more useful things, rather than struggling with distractions. But to think like that is a serious mistake. The whole time which we spend struggling with these distractions, is a time which is very agreeable to God, and which brings us more benefit than we imagine. As regards retreats, you realise that you will also be tempted to abandon them, out of other motives. If all these temptations have not as yet come to you, they will do so sooner or later. Be strong in faith and in your interior fervour..... In all your pains and difficulties, turn to God. Humble yourselves before him and submit yourselves to the divine Will. Always remember that patience, joined to a humble confidence in God, makes the missionary invincible. In that way, he will triumph over all difficulties. *(ND. VIII, p.398)*

Prayer:

Praise be to you, O Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son! See how we have come very near to committing ecological suicide, through disobeying you. Divine Master, you who renew everything, give us the grace of loving the environment which you have put into our care, and may we always think of future generations. Amen

DAY SEVEN: Workers of the Spirit for Reconciliation and Peace (Basic Christian Communities, Refugee Camps, etc)

The Word of God: (*Col. 3. 8 - 12*)

But now you, of all people, must give all these things up: getting angry, being bad-tempered, spitefulness, abusive language and dirty talk; and never tell each other lies. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator; and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised or the uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man. There is only Christ: he is everything and is in everything. You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience.

Official Texts: (*Africae munus, No. 84 - 85*)

Millions of migrants, displaced people or refugees, are seeking a fatherland and a place of peace in Africa or on other continents. The dimensions of this exodus, which affects every country, reveal the hidden extent of the different types of poverty which are often caused by failures in public administration. Thousands of people have tried, and are still trying, to cross deserts and seas in search of an oasis of peace and prosperity, where they hope to find a better education for their children, and greater liberty. Unfortunately, very many refugees or displaced persons meet with all kinds of violence and exploitation, including imprisonment and all too often death. Certain countries have responded to this drama by enacting repressive legislation. The precarious situation of these poor people should invoke compassion and a generous solidarity on the part of everyone. On the contrary, it often engenders fear and anxiety. For many people regard the migrants as a burden, looking on them with suspicion, seeing in them only danger, insecurity and trouble. This perception provokes reactions of intolerance, xenophobia and racism. These migrants are forced because of the instability of their situation, to carry out work which is ill paid, and often illegal, humiliating or degrading. The human conscience must be indignant before such situations. Migration to the interior or exterior of the continent of Africa, becomes thus a multi-dimensional drama, which seriously effects the human capital of Africa, provoking destabilisation or the destruction of families..... The Church will continue to make its voice heard, and to do its best to defend every human person.

Libermann Text: (*Letter to Fr. Blanpin, 1848*)

In a very short time the slaves are going to be freed from their captivity. They will thus immediately enjoy all the rights of citizens. They will elect their Deputies for the National Assembly. Is not all this a miracle worked by God? Poor people, what joy they are going to have.... Recommend to them, peace, gentleness, and forgiveness for injuries received from those who maltreated them in the past. Teach them to profit from their liberty for the good of their souls, encouraging them to take instruction in our holy religion, and to procure a certain affluence for their families. Guide them to use their liberty with dignity and nobility, in this way showing themselves to be dignified and thus bring joy to their friends. (ND. X, p.126)

Prayer:

Praise be to you, O Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Look on your African children, shaken as they are by deep trauma. They ask you for the strength and courage to forgive each other so that life can spring up everywhere. Amen.

DAY EIGHT : Celebrate Forgiveness and Live in Communion: The Gift of the Spirit in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

The Word of God: *(Lk. 17. 3 - 4)*

Watch yourselves! If your brother does something wrong, reprove him and, if he is sorry, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times a day and seven times comes back to you and says, "I am sorry", you must forgive him.

Official Texts: *(Africae munus, No. 152)*

In order to build a society which is reconciled, just and peaceful, the most efficacious means is a life of intimate communion with God and with other people. In effect, around the table of the Lord, are reunited men and women no matter what their origins, cultures, races, languages and ethnic differences may be. They form a single and same unity thanks to the Body and Blood of Christ. By means of the Eucharistic Christ, they become blood relatives, or even better, authentic brothers and sisters, thanks to the Word, and to the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ himself. This bond of brotherhood and sisterhood is even stronger than family ties, or those of ethnicity. "For the people whom he has chosen from the beginning, he has predestined to reproduce the image of his Son, so that the Son might be the first born of many brethren". The example of Jesus makes them capable of loving one another, and of giving their lives for each other. For the love by which everyone is loved must be communicated to others in action and in truth. It is therefore indispensable that we celebrate in community every Sunday, the Day of the Lord, as well as Holidays of Obligation.

Libermann Text: *(Instructions to his Missionaries, 1851)*

Jesus Christ sends us even as he himself has been sent. Our mission is his mission. It is Jesus who lives in those he has sent, and who suffers when they suffer. He draws souls to God his Father, and communicates his graces, also through those he has sent. But, in order that Jesus may live in those he has sent and do everything in them and through them, it is necessary that they themselves live in him. They must be united with him in their lives, sufferings and apostolic activity.

If this is not the case, then they have been sent by Jesus Christ only figuratively, and not in reality. Jesus was sent by the Father, not figuratively, but possessing in himself the substantial life of his Father. So make no mistake about it! He is sending us exactly as he was sent. In sending us, Jesus Christ has marked us with his sacramental character. He lives in us and in our apostolic activity, and communicates his merits in this way. Thus, our lives and activity become his. But for that to happen, our lives and activity must be like his. For Jesus does not live in the missionary who is not like him, and does not communicate his merits through such a person. *(E. S. - Ecrits Spirituels - Spiritual Writings pp. 374 - 375)*

Prayer:

Praise be to you, O Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son! We thank you for the infinite gift of the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. They are sources of renewal and rebirth for us. Give to us your children, the grace of Sacramental Renewal. Amen.

DAY NINE: The Consecrated Life, a Gift of the Holy Spirit for our Day

The Word of God: (*Jer. 1. 4 - 8;*)

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me, saying: 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as prophet to the nations. I said, 'Ah, Lord Yahweh; look, I do not know how to speak: I am a child!' But Yahweh replied, 'Do not say, "I am a child". Go now to those to whom I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to protect you - it is Yahweh who speaks!' Then Yahweh put out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me: 'There! I am putting my words into your mouth!'

Official Texts: (*Africae munus, Nos. 117 - 119*)

By the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, the life of consecrated persons has become a prophetic witnessing. So they can be models for reconciliation, justice and peace, even in situations of great tension. Community life shows that it is possible to live in fraternity and unity, even where there are differences of race or ethnic origins. The consecrated person can and must show and believe that in Africa today, all consecrated persons who follow Jesus Christ find in him the secret of the joy of living together in harmony. Mutual love and fraternal communion are daily consolidated by the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.

Dear consecrated brothers and sisters, may you continue to live your charism with a truly apostolic zeal in your different spheres of life and work, as indicated by your Founders! Let you take ever greater care to keep your lamps burning! Your Founders wanted to follow Christ in truth, through their response to his call. The different works which are the fruits of their labours are jewels which adorn the Church. It is right and proper then to develop these by following as faithfully as possible the charism of your Founders, their thoughts, and their projects. Here I would like to underline the important part played by consecrated persons in the life of the Church and in its missionary activity. Consecrated persons are a necessary and precious help in pastoral work, but also are a manifestation of the intimate nature of the Christian vocation.

Libermann Text: (*Letter to Father Boulanger, 1850*)

The essential end of the Congregation is the Apostolate. Those who join us are going to be employed by the Congregation according to its ends, following its intentions and its spirit, on the Missions confided to it by the Holy See. In order that this might happen, everyone must apply themselves wherever they are sent with zeal and fervour, but within the Congregation and according to its views and intentions, as well as in conformity to its spirit. The Congregations is not then and never can be secondary. Attachment to the Congregation is of the essence and must be the main bond in our lives. Vows are taken in the Congregation, not to the Mission. Our bonds with the Congregation are lifelong, unlike those for the Mission, to which we are attached only for the time we spend there. So it is absolutely necessary that our first attachment is to the Congregation, while however there must be also a great affection, a complete devotion and a true zeal for the Mission to which we have been sent. (*ND XII p.466*)

Prayer:

Praise be to you, O Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. You are inviting us to read the signs of the times, in order to discern the will of the Father, and do it. Give to all consecrated persons everywhere, the ability to discover in the Consecrated Life a road towards the Kingdom of Heaven, and to be the martyrs which the world so badly needs today. Amen