



July 12th

THE NEW SHOFAR

Divine Revelation is a fact, not a pious myth!

God reveals not just ideas, but His very self.

We know how all creation is groaning in labour pains even until now

G.K.Chesterton observed: *the Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.* And that should be our starting point in seeking to apply the Parable of the Sower to Christian life in today's world. If the challenges facing Gospel living today are to be met, they will not succeed on the basis of simply repeating the ways of the past. More will need to be demanded of all of us. That “more” is not going to be the adoption of what John Henry Newman the *liberalism* of our contemporary Western world, a religion of *sentiment*. It is going to be through a return to a biblical faithfulness, a way of living that is founded on what God has revealed to us and through the divine nourishment that comes in the sacraments, particularly through the Eucharist.

We are a Pentecost people

Any hope of a new era of Evangelism is going to involve a time of pain and struggle. The great early Father of the Church Origen warned...*whoever is near to Jesus, is near to the fire and whoever plays with fire will be burned.* He was paraphrasing Jesus' own words...*I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!*

The image of fire is one that calls for purification; it is a *fire* that inspires, binds men and women together into a new human community. This is the Church on earth and the Spirit animates each of the members of the Body of Christ to collaborate with God's saving works.

The Spirit makes us countercultural

The Church in the past could be fairly called “comfortable” religion. It blended in with the wider culture and no one felt marginalised by living a public Christianity. There was little chafing between our life in the Church and our living in the world. *Spirit driven Discipleship* is the opposite. It is countercultural because it seeks to convert the broader public culture through preaching and through living Revealed Truths, by worshipping in Spirit and truth and by modelling a way of human life God means for all men and women in the world. Spirit Christianity does not worry about “getting along”. It seeks to convert the world to Christ.

The world has rejected the religious structures that supported the old ways of being a Christian and along with it the truths on which they had been built. The Gospel speaks of Truth that is applicable to every human person on earth, the foundation for every human community. It is not just for church going Christians. It is the only way to be fully human.

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These are not truths for us alone but are Truths brought to us by the Son of Man that we may bring them alive across the whole of humanity. Disciples enlivened by the Spirit of Fire will uphold a biblical morality that is a God-given way of ordering these human relationships. How well is our world going to accept that Truth?

It is not easy being afire with the Spirit!

This is a major reason as to why the seeds of faith fail and fall by the wayside. Lukewarm Christians into today's world do little more than prop up a religious structure that really has no future. We find ourselves at that time in history when there can be no other option but submitting to the transforming fire of the Holy Spirit. True Disciples need to explore ways of even more deeply immersing ourselves into Scripture and into sacramental living. It will need to prioritise the building up of living faith communities, communities that are not just for the benefit of the communities themselves but so that they can bring about the conversion of the wider world in which they live. For the sake of mission, must strive for a life of holiness. Holiness here mans to become more Christ-like in all things.

One author describes it this way – we are to become deeply converted, thoroughly repented, thoroughly catechised, sacramentally enriched and evangelically impassioned Disciples of Christ launching ourselves under the Spirit into the postmodern world of today (Weigel). What a parish plan that would be!

But it is not going to be easy because it grows out of faith

Whatever of its rejection by a sceptical world, Christians accept how God Himself has revealed His divine saving plan to us. This biblical Truth is not something humans have made up, created out of good will or good intent. The biblical Truth originates in God and therefore is to be obeyed. If we cannot profess faith in the Truth of the Scriptures, then there can be no future for the Church. If we do not have faith in Christianity as a revealed religion, then what we are building is false.

God is a God who comes searching for us, calling to us, inviting us to share in his offer of a new life. What we have is God given. We believe Christ is offering the world a way of addressing the modern anxiety that bedevils the postmodern world. Post-modern living has burdened people with all kinds of demands as we are urged to be free, to be individuals in our own way, following our own lights. It has rejected all kinds of external moral norms and expectations, with each person expected to themselves create such norms. These are usually flexible, subject to external pressures and expectations and based on an understanding of the importance of being content and happy. They have no concept of a life beyond the grave. We live. We die. We end.

But that is not the way of the Creator God from whom all life comes. God offers us more than the here-and-now with a message that we are created in love and defined by a love that is eternal, a love to be found in all its fullness in Jesus who is our Christ.

Divine Revelation is a truth. A fact. It is not a pious myth. God reveals not simply propositions about Himself. God reveals Himself and wants us to be with Him.

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