

...he will guide you into all truth...

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you...

In these last verses of today's Gospel, Jesus presents to His disciples the ministry of the Holy Spirit whom He will soon pour forth upon His followers following His Ascension, on the day of Pentecost. He describes the extraordinary range of functions of the Holy Spirit, as He will operate within the Church. Let's list them briefly. Jesus tells them that the Spirit *will guide you into all truth*; he will speak *whatsoever he shall hear* from Jesus; *he will shew you things to come*; *He will glorify Jesus*; and *He shall shew* what He has received from Jesus to them.

This is a list of marvelous proportions. And this promised impartation was not merely to the apostles and their associates, but to the Church at large. That means that it belongs to us, no less than to them. We are the contemporary heirs of this promise.

Now if I am presented with a gift, it will be of little use to me unless I'm prepared to receive it. If it is a piece of electrical equipment, I'll have to have the necessary current to operate it. If it is a game or a craft, I'll have to acquire the skills to manage it. If it is a ticket to a theme park, I'll have to muster the endurance and courage to go use it. If I cannot expand my capacity in order to enjoy the gift, it will remain as useless as if it had never been given to me in the first place.

The realization in the Church of these words of our Lord has been interpreted in various ways. Some would maintain that the words *all truth* are limited only to Holy Scripture. Others believe that the Lord was referring only to the teaching ministry of the Church as expressed, say, through the apostles and their successors, such as a pope. Still more are certain that each and every believer has been thus gifted with the right of interpretation and judgment. Each of these certainly contains an element of the truth, I would suggest, but taken alone, they are unsatisfactory. Taken together, they begin to reveal the real extent of what Christ has actually given the Church.

What does it really mean to be *guided into all truth*? Note the word *all*. There is nothing, of course, that exists outside of the word *all*. But certainly omniscience isn't what's intended here! It is *all truth* relevant to that which the Church needs to survive, to thrive, to understand and operate within its current context, in whatever age that may be. It is *all truth* with respect to whatever God's intents are at a given moment. It is *all truth* that enables the Church to effectively

combat all error that storms against her. Now if these are indeed part and parcel of *all truth*, we should be greatly encouraged by our Lord's words.

Have you ever noticed concerning criticism that if it is constant, resistance to it grows weaker, the ability to mount a reasonable defense diminishes, and one may be worn down even to the point of half believing it? The church is being told: "You make these oppressive claims that only you will be saved, and everyone else is going to hell." "People don't believe in absolute truth any more, so your thinking is at best outmoded, and at worst, downright harmful." "No one has the authority to claim what is right for anyone else. Your beliefs are a product of the past, and don't apply any longer." These attitudes, the more we are exposed to them, try our faith. We see how little effect the church appears to be having on the course of things, and how overwhelmingly disinterested people generally are. In a state of confusion and impotence, Jesus' words about *guiding us into all truth* seem to painfully mock us.

Nevertheless, they are so, and remain so. Neither the passage of time, nor spiritual assault, nor doubt, nor any other agency, can change them. Let us stop for a moment, in the midst of it all, and quiet our souls before God. Let us try to still the inner voice of our own skepticism and despair. Let us plead to God to enlarge our capacity to take hold of and make use of that which He has so generously made available to us. Do we possess enough of the confidence and serenity of spirit and faith to rejoice in what we've received?

...he will guide you into all truth; whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Let's begin to consider these wonderful words. Knowledge of *all truth* should enable us to see through the accusations and obfuscation that are aimed at us, to discern where they are coming from, what has motivated them, and how we should react to them, instead of being merely victimized by them. Rather than the reflexive answer, "Duh..., I guess you're right," and once again beating a shameful retreat, with glad hearts we realize that God has given us absolutely every means of understanding what's really, *really* going on. And this is far more than mere political insight, like: "Ah, this is all part of a left-wing agenda to wage war against religion and tradition!" No, it is more like this: "That age-old enemy of truth is determined to keep souls from the light of the glory of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And his frantic pace has only increased to oppose the church and render it ineffective through division. By distraction and harassment he would prevent the church from employing its greatest spiritual weapon, the power of prayer. All of those great changes that engulf nations and peoples are only harnessed to the final purposes of God. His Kingdom will ultimately triumph, in terms far more glorious than we possess the ability to conceive."

...he will guide you into all truth, and will shew you things to come... This makes every single one of us into genuine interpreters of the times and events within which we live. Though we may struggle to understand, we should never be ultimately at a loss. The fact that the church does not seem to speak prophetically today with insight and authority, is a most unfortunate state of things, and it speaks of the success which has been achieved in keeping the church ignorant of its spiritual endowment. The means used to achieve that end have been manifold. If not discouragement, or relentless criticism, it has been the sheer effort to guarantee that the church spends so little *personal* time with God that there is no opportunity for it to hear the Spirit when He *speaks*.

When the Church has matured to the point where it can truly and effectively be *guided into all the truth*, there will also be certain very important fruits that will be evident with its possession of the truth. It won't be the shout of political victory. It won't be the satisfaction that our values and beliefs have won the day. It will be Christian kindness and gentleness, understanding, peace, and love. Without these going on before and coming along behind everything we do and say, we may have truth, but we will just be marketing it at the same dreary yard-sale prices at the flea-market of ideas along with every other claimant to truth, whether it be secular humanism, or atheism, or post-modernism, or anything else-ism. We cannot afford to be sitting at just another table of shoddy goods in the midst of such company.

Ascension Sunday will be upon us soon, and just after it, the Day of Pentecost. It was on that day that Christ poured forth the Spirit upon the Church in its very first day of life. Though thousands of years separate us from that event, we are united with those believers in a timeless bond, and full sharers with them of that gift they received.

This, brothers and sisters, should cause us to sit up and take notice!

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.