

There are many moments when we could stray from the path which leads to God. There are many side tracks we could wander down. But God has reassured us with these words: I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you (Ps 32:8). The Holy Spirit is our best Adviser, our best Teacher, our best Guide. Our Lord's promise to his Apostles for when they might find themselves in very difficult situations, is very heartening: When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you (Matt 10: 19-20). They were to have the special assistance of the Holy Spirit as would Christians through the centuries when placed in similar circumstances.

The behaviour of so many Christian martyrs shows how the promise Jesus made has been fulfilled in the life of the Church. It is moving to see related in documents which have come down to us the serenity and wisdom of people with little learning, and even of children. The Holy Spirit, who assists us in even the smallest difficulties, will do so in a special way in times of stress when we have to confess our faith. Through the gift of wisdom, the Holy Spirit perfects the acts of the virtue of prudence, and prudence in turn tells us which means to use in any given situation. Frequently we must make a decision; sometimes it is an important matter, at other times much less so. But in all of them, our holiness is in some way involved. God grants the gift of wisdom to those who are docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, so that they may make decisions quickly and correctly. This gift is like a supernatural instinct for knowing which way gives most glory to God. Just as prudence is present in all our actions, so too the Holy Spirit, through the gift of counsel, is the Light and permanent guiding Principle of our actions. The Paraclete inspires us when we choose the means to carry out God's will. He leads us along paths which involve charity, peace, joy, sacrifice, fulfilment of duty and faithfulness in small things. He marks out the path for us at every instant.

The first area where this gift must be lived is in our own interior life. There, in our soul in grace, the Paraclete acts in a silent way, gently but forcefully. This most-wise Teacher has such skilful ways of teaching us that they are wonderful to watch. They are all sweetness, all affection, all goodness, all prudence, all discretion (F.J. del Valle, About the Holy Spirit). From those teachings and from the light we bear in our soul come those impulses, those calls to improve and respond ever better to God. From him come those firm resolutions that can change a life or give rise to greater effectiveness in our dealings with God, at work, and in the network of activities which comprise our day.

To allow ourselves be advised and guided by the Paraclete, we should want to belong entirely to God, not placing any limitations on the action of grace. We should want to seek God for what he is in himself, infinitely worthy of our love, and without expecting other rewards or compensations. This we should do both in times of spiritual fervour as well as in times of spiritual dryness. We must seek, serve, and love God unselfishly, not in order to be virtuous, nor to acquire holiness or grace or even Heaven itself nor for the happiness of possessing him, but solely for the sake of loving him. And when he offers us graces and gifts, we should tell him that the only gift we want is the gift of love, in order to love him; if he says to us: Ask me for anything

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you like, we should ask for nothing except love and more love, in order to love him and to love him more (ibid). With that love of God comes everything else a person may desire in his heart.

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