

The Miracle of Love

Christians were few during the first decades of the founding of the Church, very few compared to the idolaters. For example, how many Christians were there in the city of Athens? The Apostle Paul left a few in this famous city when he left for Corinth after preaching at Mars Hill. As the Holy text says, "Some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysios the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them." (Acts 17:34)

How many Christians were there at Veria? How many at Thessalonika, at Philippi, and the other cities? A few? One Christian out of a thousand? There were no statistics at the time to tell us exactly what percentage of the people were Christian. However, it is a fact that they were few in that vast Roman Empire. Yet in spite of it, that tiny minority of Christians exercised enormous influence in the ancient pagan world. The Christians of that time had an attracting power that drew people to the faith. And what was it that especially attracted people? The miracles? Certainly the miracles that those Christians performed attracted people to the new faith, the true faith. Because it was not a small thing for the idolaters to see those fishermen from Galilee and the other preachers of the Gospel mention the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and incurable diseases which no doctor and no medicine had the power to cure were cured instantly, demons which had nested in the souls of people were expelled, and the dead were raised at the mention of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But more than the miracles, what made the greatest impression was the love that the Christians of those first years of the establishment of the church were preaching and foremost were practicing in their everyday life. Love was the greatest surprise that the Christians presented in the midst of the ancient world. Love was "the new thing", the great miracle that is above all other miracles, that illuminated and astonished the world. But how? Was there not love before the gospel was preached? There was, but love prior to Christ was weak, confined between narrow borders and not able to rise to the heights. The love that had the best form was that love that every man had for himself. Love your neighbor as yourself the Law of Moses is heard to say. But the Lord gave a new measure of love, and with this measure now calls man to measure love. What measure? It is His love. A love that is not preceded by any expression of love, any virtue, any achievement that can move and attract by man, rushed from the heights of Heaven and came to earth to visit him, the indifferent, the cold, man who was wallowing in the mud of the most shameful passions, man who hated and blasphemed God and became His enemy. Love embraced this man and opened through the Cross the faucets that washed him, cleaned him, and made him whiter than snow, and elevated him to the heavens. O! The love of Christ! It went as far as Hades to defeat death and elevate man. For sinners, for His enemies, for blasphemers, for those brought before the bar of spiritual justice, for the impious, for those on whom He should open the heavens and rain fire and sulphur, the Lord offered His blood.

If this love ceases to move man, he will become more feelingless than the rocks of Golgotha, which were touched and shaken on the day of the Crucifixion. One has to believe this in order to understand the love of Christ. The love, with which the Lord through His teaching and example, and especially through His sacrifice on the Cross, showed the world that this love is the new measure with

which one's love towards one's neighbor must be measured. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34)

The Cross of Christ, this is our measure. Compare your love to His love and you will see how far you are from the ideal love.

The twelve Apostles mimicked that love that the Lord showed. In words and deeds they showed toward others and toward the whole world. The Apostles were united with the bonds of love, which no satanic power could break. There were no more jealousies, hatreds, envies did not exist between them. Any kind of weakness vanquished Christ's love. They were one soul in twelve bodies. Their thoughts, feelings, words, actions, and deeds, all of their conduct, internal and external, revolved around one center, Christ. And the early Christians mimicked Christ's love and the love of the twelve Apostles. And among them were some of those who were at the Praetorium on those early hours on Holy Friday and shouted: "Crucify Him, crucify Him," against our Benefactor. Christ's love, which took them in and forgave them, had moved their hearts, and they wanted this divine love of His to spread into the world around them so that it might taste of it and become as happy as they had become.

All were united beneath the Cross, that eternal monument of divine love, and became a brotherhood. "The multitude of those who believed," says the sacred Book of Acts, "were of one heart and of one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed were his own, but they had all things in common." (Acts 4:32) The first Christians were elevated by this love to heights the philosophers of the ancient world were not able to achieve. And the image of those first Christians who practiced this new commandment of the love of Christ in their everyday life, was the most magnificent sight the world had ever seen. People were astonished at the grandeur of this love.

Humanity thirsted for this love, because of the hatred that burned like a sirocco, which burned the hearts of men and turned them into a dry and arid land. The words of love by the Nazarene fell like heavenly dew into the hearts of men, because man was not created to hate but to love. And Christ's preaching of love brought his heart back into its proper track, to its source, to the center of life.

The pagans who saw what kind of love reigned amongst the Christians, even in the most remote areas, were astonished and said: The Christians love each other even before they know each other! An invisible and mysterious power, like the power of gravity, connected and held the Christian people together. And this love poured out toward the pagan world, watering and refreshing others, too, who were not within the Christian community, even toward those enemies, those terrible persecutors, those killers of Christians. Christians were crucified, and like Christ they prayed for their crucifiers. Christians inside their prisons and their various places of torture, also prayed for their persecutors. This love was softened and bent the most hard-hearted, who would throw down their knives and chains and cry out that they, too, had become Christians. - It is said that a horrible plague broke out in Alexandria, that great pagan center of antiquity

during the Second Century in the tenure of Dionysios, the holy bishop of the city. People were dying by the hundreds. The pagans abandoned their own people and fled the city in panic in order to be saved. The sick were left to wait for death... Suddenly angels appeared at the homes of those pagans. They were the Christians of the city. These fearless people entered the mansions and the huts of those pagans with a smile on their lips, and took upon themselves the care of the sick whose own families had abandoned them. Many of those Christians were infected with that deadly disease and died. But this self-sacrificing love of the Christians who were being persecuted and sacrificed even until the day before produced miraculous results, which thousands of miracles could not bring. It conquered disbelief. Instead of thousands of beautiful words, it showed the superiority of the Christian religion over the other religions. Many idolaters who had hated the Christians violently now changed their minds and believed in Christ, Who gives such power to His followers so that they sacrifice themselves to their enemies.

And this was not an isolate event. Such happenings were common in the lives of the Christians of the first centuries.

The love of Christ, then, wrote the most beautiful pages of Christian history. And how could Christianity not spread to all of the known world after such a wonderful brilliance of Christian love?

Love, Christian love, as those Christians lived it, this is a great miracle.

My beloved readers! From the magnificent picture that the Christians of the first centuries have painted, let us come to this last century, the 20th in which we live. The Christians today are not few, the way they were as they were in the first centuries. They are many millions. They are one quarter of the population of the world. They compose the most civilized parts of the world. They are foremost in Science. Should not love then bloom along with knowledge and science in Christian lands? Unfortunately this is not so. Knowledge has not watered the tree of love but managed to dry it up with the satanic pride that it cultivated. Love has dried up. The wild tree of hatred sprouted and grew in place of love. Its fruit is bitter and deadly. The land of "Christian" Europe has been transformed into a slaughterhouse. Christians attacking Christians, tearing one another to pieces like wild animals, worse than wild animals. This pitiful spectacle of mutual slaughter was brought on by the inhabitants of the most civilized continent of the world, which is for the most part inhabited by Christians. They gave the rest of the world slaughter two times in the first half of this century. Perhaps they bring it in about a third time...

Astonished, the world that does not believe in Christ has turned its sight to old lady Europe, the ancient cradle of Christianity, and continuously asks: Are they Christian? Are they human? These people are wild animals. It is not the love of one another, but the killing of one another that is their motto. Let us get away from these beasts? Our civilization is better...

Before this spectacle one cannot do anything but sigh and say: It would be a thousand times better if there were a few thousand real Christians, who love one another according to the measure of Christ's love, than the 700 million contemporary Christians

who are Christian in name only, who with their selfishness, with their quarrels, their haughtiness, their egotism, their abysmal passions constitute the worst defamation of the holy religion of the Nazarene, and the greatest obstacle of the spreading to the Gospel of salvation.

The love of Christians, here, is the great miracle. The hatred of Christians is the great scandal.

While there is time, let us listen to the voice of our Savior Christ, which calls us to leave the road of hatred and walk on the road of love, which He Himself traced through His Cross: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this will all know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13: 34-35)

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