

## Sunday after Ascension – 1.6.14

Sunday after Ascension and Our Lord goes from us. But promising the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Jesus tells us that he, the Spirit of Truth shall testify of him – and that we also shall bear witness because we have been with him from the beginning (John – beginning two or three times). And he goes on, “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended” – that you should not be caused to stumble. And “the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. “These things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor me”.

And we are not to be offended! It is not exactly reassuring that we should be treated as he, Our Lord, is. But we have to remember Our Lord’s emphasis on the Comforter, whom he sends to be with us. We do not have to earn our salvation. The Good News is that, “While we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly” (Paul). But while we do not save ourselves – while we cannot save ourselves, there is a response required of us. Blessed Simeon of the Orthodox Church in the tenth century, wrote these words, “One who has not endeavoured to receive the grace of Christ and to comprehend its presence in his soul, in vain calls himself a Christian”.

Another Orthodox priest – Sarov the elder, draws our attention to the aim of the Christian life, and that is “the acquisition of the Holy Spirit”. The acquiring – the appropriating – of the Holy Spirit. We have to remember Simeon’s words. The acquisition of the Holy Spirit is to receive the grace of Christ and to comprehend this “grace” in our soul: to receive – and to comprehend – that which is given – which is the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ – his giving his life for us – and his giving of grace to us, that we should recognise the true nature of things.

All this we meet with when we are comforted by a holy person. Confronted because this confrontation can come about through radio, television, meetings, reading, by chance – by whatever. Something given – but we need to be on our toes in order to receive - to comprehend what is being given us.

Loved by God – opportunities there will be – opportunities there already are.

Simply to enter this church – is one such opportunity. But to be here for only a couple of minutes is not to have entered.

It sounds Irish – but we have need to come in and meet with ourselves, as it were, already here – that takes a little while.

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