



61<sup>st</sup> Year

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## FAITH THE FRUIT OF DIVINE GRACE

After the stoning of Saint Stephen, a great persecution of the Christians of the church of Jerusalem took place (Acts 7:58-59. 8:1). Resulting in them being scattered to other areas among which was the then flourishing city of Antioch of Syria. A city in which many Hellenes dwelt from the time of its founding by Seleucus in (293 A.D).

There according to the narration of the Book of Acts some of them who were persecuted from Jerusalem went, hailing from Cyprus and Cyrene of Libya. And they began preaching the gospel of Christ to the Hellenes, in other words, to the Greek speaking Jews. This was important for the widening of the Church. Because up till then the preaching the Gospel was addressed mainly to the Jews.

### **The manner and the acceptance of the preaching a work of grace**

With the phrases “evangelizing the Lord Jesus” and “the hand of the Lord was with them” the content of their preaching was defined and the manner of its acceptance by those who were listening to them.

1. As regards the content the person of Christ is projected and not theoretical ideas, philosophical or moralistic teachings. Because Christ is the incarnate God and Savior of the world. Thanks to Jesus man was renewed spiritually morally and physically, in other words, he was engraced so as to become a partaker of sanctification and eternal life, a son by grace of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

2. The manner of acceptance of the Christian faith is the “hand of the Lord” (Acts 11:21), in other words the divine strengthening which Jesus Christ granted to those evangelizing, His holy name. In other words, wherever they were preaching the Godman was with them through the Spirit and He was giving them strength of spirit and soul to impart the truth of the Gospel. This furthermore He had promised to His 11 disciples after His resurrection. “Behold I am with you all

days..." (Mt. 28:20), in other words, that He will be with them and He will strengthen them constantly in the work of spreading the faith.

The Lord however does not only help those who are serving the Church in the spreading of the Gospel but also those who are hearing concerning the truth of faith. He acts through the grace of the Holy Spirit in their hearts so that their mind is enlightened and their heart accepts the preaching of the faith. So that they agree to believe in Christ as God and savior of the world and to become a faithful members of the Church.

The divine grace has penetrating power and enters into the innermost depths of man's soul. "God who examines kidneys and hearts" finds the point of contact of man's disposition and the convincing energy of the Comforter and convinces the soul in a wondrous manner to accept the revealed truth.

And the reformation of man is performed. The hearer of the divine word accepts, is convinced and believes. This is the power of faith. God cooperates with man and the mystery of salvation is performed. Christ's answer to the confession of Peter is characteristic that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. "Flesh and blood did not reveal to you, but my father who is in the heavens" (Mt. 16: 16-17). In other words, his faith in Christ and his confession that He is the Son of the living God is not a result of human inspiration, but divine illumination and a visit of the grace of God the Father.

### **Human will a presupposition of faith**

Despite the fact that the grace of God is the protagonist in the acceptance of faith, Saint John Chrysostom, writes, however, "grace, even though grace, saves those who wish". In other words, despite the fact that grace is a gift of God to man, in order for him to believe however, he cannot believe without himself also wanting to. Faith is the fruit of spiritual freedom and not force and violence. God does not do propaganda, "brainwashing", but He calls man with discretion and much love to voluntarily respond to the calling of the Creator, to the revelation of the Christian faith. In this way the first Christian communities were made and the local Christian churches were founded, like the Church of Antioch, where for the first time, after the Resurrection of Christ, whoever believed in Him were called Christians. A name which bears the seal of divine grace but also of a voluntary-disposition of the faithful person. It contains, in it, in other words, the precious fruit of the Holy Spirit which is the shameless and certain faith in the divine person of our Lord Jesus Christ and the body of His holy Church.

Archim. Ch. N.