

Sunday, April 10, 2011

The Visitations of God

The story of healing the man who was born blind sheds some light on the Visitations of God. This story is similar to many encounter of the Lord Jesus with the sick, the sinners, or the needy, all of which had visitations from God to His people in a personal way, one soul at a time because He loves every soul and seeks the salvation of every soul, and He is keen on giving a special gift to everyone.

* The visitations of God versus the visitations of mankind

The visitations of God are significantly different from the visitations of mankind towards one another. The visitation of God is in essence a visitation of love and care without any notion of personal interest or human-like compliment. Rather, it is an expression of a fatherly concern for man who is incapable of taking care of his own affairs. Therefore God comes to him and shares with him his emotion and even his suffering, then He provides for him an amazing gift that changes his life completely. God is capable of making a change and He visits us because He wants to change and elevate our lives... *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10).

* Some forms of Visitations

1 – Visitations to show His love and compassion. This can be seen in the Old Testament when God visited His people as they lived in the humiliation of servitude and in the land of Egypt *"I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt."* (Exodus 3:16)... *"And when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped."* (Exodus 4:31). We also see in the Book of Ruth that God visited His people after the famine *"The LORD had visited His people by giving them bread."* (Ruth 1: 6). Then, we see the greatest visitation, filled with love and compassion for all humanity, through the incarnation of the only Begotten Son from St. Mary for the salvation of mankind. This great visitation was expressed in the famous praise of Zechariah the priest: *"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people... Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."* (Luke 1).

2 – Visitations to answer a prayer and or to fulfill a need. This is seen in the visitation of God to Abraham and Sarah with the newborn baby Isaac, who they were waiting for, *"And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said..."* (Genesis 21: 1). It is also seen in the visitation of Hannah with the conception of Samuel the Prophet, and later with more children after she gave him up to serve God, *"And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters."* (1 Samuel 2:21).

3 – Visitations to search, seek and deliverance. This is what God always does with His children as a good shepherd tending to His sheep. (Isaiah 40: 11, John 10:11). *"I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day."* (Ezekiel 34: 11)

4 – Visitations to chastise and to discipline. This is because God is also a just judge and, in His visitations, He holds us accountable to the sins that we have not repented from doing, as He repeatedly emphasized: *"in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin."* (Exodus 32: 34). *"I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel..."* (1 Samuel 15: 2) *"Then I shall visit their transgression with a rod, and their sins with a whip."* (Psalm 89: 32).

5 – Visitations of grace. This is an exceptional type of Divine visitations and it is the most powerful and refreshing to the soul. It is the visitation by which God visits us from time to time during prayers, reading the divine scriptures, the liturgy, praise, chanting, or listening to sermon. In these visitations, feelings embrace the beautiful spiritual meanings such that the heart is touched with the love of Christ; moreover this love engulfs the heart and ignites it with indescribable joy. These visits are also usually accompanied with abundant flow of tears that is hard to control. This is usually a golden opportunity for deep prayers from a broken heart filled with repentance, joy, and peace.

* Time of Visitations

There is a time of visitation for each one, blessed is he who benefits from it, otherwise he becomes like Jerusalem over which the Lord Jesus wept because she did not know the time of her visitation so she perished (Luke 19: 41-44).

* How to benefit from the visitations of God?

- + Being responsive to His calling and obeying His commandment which is always beneficial to us.
- + Repentance and changing of life, and He will give us strength to do so.
- + Accepting His chastisement and judgment because it will lead us to be sanctified and to the salvation of our souls.
- + Giving thanks, praise, and glory to God. This is the least we can offer in return to His splendid love by which He visits us. This is what we saw in the praise of Hannah the mother of Samuel, Zechariah the priest, and our mother St. Mary.

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