

LESSON NINTH.

ON THE HOLY GHOST AND HIS DESCENT UPON THE APOSTLES.

94 Q. Who is the Holy Ghost?

A. The Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

* 95 Q. From Whom does the Holy Ghost proceed?

A. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son.

* 96 Q. Is the Holy Ghost equal to the Father and the Son?

A. The Holy Ghost is equal to the Father and the Son, being the same Lord and God as they are.

* 97 Q. On what day did the Holy Ghost come down upon the apostles?

A. The Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles ten days after the Ascension of Our Lord; and the day on which He came down upon the apostles is called Whitsunday or Pentecost.

We have seen already that the apostles fled and were very much afraid when Our Lord was taken prisoner. Even Peter, the chief of the apostles, who said he would die rather than leave Our Lord, shamefully denied Him; and St. John, the beloved disciple, stood near the cross, but offered no resistance to Our Lord's enemies. After the crucifixion of Our Lord, the apostles, afraid of being put to death, shut themselves up in a room. Ten days after Our Lord's ascension they were praying as usual in their room, when suddenly they heard the sound as it were of a great wind, and then they saw tongues the shape of our own. but all on fire, com-

ing, and one tongue resting on the head of each apostle present (Acts of the Apostles ii.).

This was the Holy Ghost coming to them. The Holy Ghost, being a pure spirit without a body, can take any form He pleases. He sometimes came in the form of a dove; so when you see a dove painted in a church near the altar, it is there to represent the Holy Ghost. You could not paint a spirit, so angels and God Himself are generally represented in pictures as they at some time appeared to men.

“**Whit-Sunday,**” or White-Sunday; probably so called because in the early ages of the Church converts were baptized on the day before, and after their baptism wore white robes or garments as a mark of the soul’s purity after baptism.

“**Pentecost**” means the fiftieth day, because the feast comes fifty days after the resurrection of Our Lord. After His resurrection He remained forty days upon earth, and ten days after He ascended into heaven the Holy Ghost came, thus making the fifty days.

After the Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles they were no longer timid men. They went forth boldly into the streets and preached Christ crucified; telling the people how the Son of God—the true Messiah promised—had been put to death. Many who heard them believed and were baptized. The first time St. Peter preached to the people three thousand were converted (Acts of the Apostles ii. 41); so that when all the apostles preached the number of Christians increased rapidly, and the Christian religion was soon carried to distant parts of the world.

At the time Our Lord was put to death the Jews were celebrating a great feast in Jerusalem. The Jews were not like us in this respect. We have many churches, and in all of them sacrifice, that is, the Holy Mass, is offered. The Jews had only one temple where sacrifice could be offered, and that was in Jerusalem. They had synagogues or meeting-houses throughout the land in which they assembled to pray and hear the Holy Scriptures read; but they could not offer sacrifice in them. Three times a year they went to Jerusalem

to celebrate their great feasts. One of these feasts was called the Pasch, or Passover, and it was during the celebration of that feast that Our Lord was put to death; so that there were many persons from all parts of the nation present at the sad execution. I must now tell you why they celebrated the Pasch. We generally celebrate a feast to commemorate—to remind us of—some great event; and the Jews celebrated this feast to remind them of their deliverance from the slavery of the Egyptians, in which their ancestors had been suffering for about two hundred years. At the end of that time God sent Moses to deliver them. You should know, then, who Moses was and what he did to deliver his people, and you should know also something of the history of his people—the Israelites—and how they came to be in Egypt.

At the time I am now going to speak of the old patriarch Jacob, Abraham's grandson, had eleven sons—for Benjamin, the twelfth son, was born afterwards—and the youngest was called Joseph. Joseph was the favorite of his father, and his brothers were jealous of him. The brothers were shepherds, and used to take their flocks to feed at a great distance from home, and did not return for a long time. One day the father sent Joseph to his brothers to see if all were well. They hated Joseph because his father loved him best; and when they saw him coming they agreed never to let him return to his father (Genesis xxxvii.). They intended to kill him. While they were debating about how they should put him to death—he was then only sixteen years old—some merchants passed on their way to Egypt; so, instead of killing him, they sold him as a slave to the merchants. Then they took Joseph's coat and dipped it in the blood of a kid, and sent it to their poor old father, saying they had found it, and making him believe that some wild beast on the way had eaten Joseph. When the merchants arrived in Egypt, Potiphar, one of the king's officers, bought Joseph, and brought him as a slave to his own house. While there, Joseph was falsely accused of a great crime, and cast into prison. While Joseph was in prison the king had a dream (Genesis xli.). He saw in the dream seven fat cows coming up out of a

river, followed by seven lean cows ; and the lean cows ate up the fat cows. He saw also seven fat ears of corn and seven lean ears of corn ; and the seven lean ears ate up the seven fat ears. The king was very much troubled, and called together all his wise men to tell him what the dream meant, but they could not. Then the king heard of Joseph, and sent for him. Now Joseph was a very good young man, and God showed him the meaning ; so he told the king that the seven fat ears of corn and the seven fat cows meant seven years of great abundance in Egypt, and that the seven lean ears and the seven lean cows meant seven years of famine that would follow, and all the abundance of the previous seven years would be consumed. So he advised the king to build great barns during the years of plenty, and gather up all the corn everywhere to save it for the years of famine. The king was delighted at Joseph's wisdom, and made him after himself the most powerful in the kingdom, giving him charge of everything, so that Joseph himself might do what he had advised. Now it happened years after this that there was a famine in the country where Joseph's father lived, and he sent all his sons down into Egypt to buy corn (Genesis xlii.). They did not know their brother Joseph, but he knew them ; and after forgiving them for what they had done to him, he sent them home with an abundance of corn. Afterwards Joseph's father and brothers left their own country and came to live near Joseph in Egypt. The king gave them good land (Genesis xlvii.), and they lived there in peace and happiness. Learn from this beautiful history of Joseph how God protects those that love and serve Him no matter where they are or in what danger they may be placed ; and how He even turns the evil deeds of their enemies into blessings for them.

After the death of Joseph and his brothers, their descendants became very numerous, and the new king of the Egyptians began to persecute them (Exodus i.). He imposed upon them the hardest works, and treated them most cruelly. He ordered that all their male infants should, as soon as born, be thrown **into** the river Nile. Now about that time Moses was born (Exodus ii.) **His** mother did not obey the king's

order, but hid him for about three months. When she could conceal him no longer she made a little cradle of rushes, and covering it over with pitch or tar to keep out the water, placed him in it, and then laid it in the tall grass by the edge of the river, sending his little sister to watch what would become of him. Just then the king's daughter came down to bathe, and seeing the little child, ordered one of her servants to bring him to her. At that moment Moses' little sister, pretending not to know him, ran up and asked the king's daughter if she wished to procure a nurse for him. The king's daughter replied in the affirmative and permitted her to bring one; so Moses' own mother was brought and engaged to be his nurse: but he was not known as her son, but as the adopted son of the king's daughter. When Moses grew up he was an officer in the king's army; but because he took the part of his persecuted countrymen he offended the king, and had to fly from the palace. He then went into another country and became a shepherd.

During all this time the persecuted Israelites were praying to the true God to be delivered from the slavery of the Egyptians, who were idolaters. One day Moses saw a bush burning; and as he came near to look at it, he heard a voice telling him not to come too near, and bidding him take off his shoes, for he was on holy ground (Exodus iii.). It was God Who thus appeared and spoke to him, and He ordered him to take off his shoes as a mark of respect and reverence. When we want to show our respect for any person or place, we take off our hats; but the people of that country, instead of their hats, took off their shoes. It was the custom of the country and did not seem strange to them.

Then God told Moses that He was going to send him to deliver His people from the Egyptians and lead them back to their own country; and He sent Aaron, the brother of Moses, with him. Then Moses said to God, the king of Egypt will not let the people go, and what can I do? God gave Moses two signs or miracles to show the king, so that he could know that Moses was really sent by Him. He gave him power to

change a rod into a serpent, and back again into a rod; power also to bring a disease instantly upon his hand, and to heal it instantly (Exodus iv.). Do these, said Almighty God, in the presence of the king. Then Moses and Aaron went to the king and did as God commanded them; and when the rod of Aaron became a serpent, the king's magicians—that is, men who do apparently wonderful things by sleight of hand or the power of the devil—cast their rods upon the ground, and they also became serpents,—not that their rods were changed into serpents, but the devil, who was helping them, took away instantly their rods and put real serpents in their place,—but Aaron's serpent swallowed them up (Exodus vii.). After these signs the king would not let the people go with Moses; for God permitted the king's heart to be hardened, so that all the Egyptians might see the great work God was going to do for His people.

Then God sent the ten plagues upon the Egyptians, while the Israelites—God's people—suffered nothing from these plagues.

The *first plague* was blood. All the water in the land was converted into blood (Exodus vii.). The king then sent for Moses, and promised that if he would take away the plague he would allow all the people to depart. Moses prayed to God, and the plague was removed. But after it was taken away the king's heart was hardened again and he would not keep his promise. Just as people in sickness, distress, or danger sometimes promise God they will lead better lives if only He will help them, and when they are saved they do not keep their promises, so did Pharaoh; and therefore God sent another plague. The *second plague* was frogs. Great numbers of them came out of the rivers and lakes, and filled all the houses of the Egyptians, and crawled into their food, beds, etc. Again the king sent for Moses and did as before; and again Moses prayed, and all the frogs went back into the waters or died (Exodus viii.). But the king again hardened his heart and did not keep his promise. The *third plague* was sciniphs (Exodus viii.)—very small flies, that filled the

land. Imagine our country filled with mosquitoes so numerous that you could scarcely walk through them; it would be a dreadful plague. As it is, two or three might cause you considerable annoyance and pain: what then if there were millions doubly venomous, because sent to punish you? So these little flies must have greatly punished the Egyptians. The *fourth plague* was flies that filled the land and covered everything, to the great disgust of the people. The *fifth plague* was murrain—a disease that broke out among the cattle. The *sixth plague* was a disease—boils—that broke out on men and beasts, so that scarcely any one could move on account of the pains and suffering. The *seventh plague* was hail, that fell in large pieces and destroyed all their crops. The *eighth plague* was locusts. These are very destructive little animals. They look something like our grasshoppers, but are about two or three times their size. They fly and come in millions. They come to this country in large numbers—almost a plague—every fifteen or twenty-five years, and the farmers fear them very much. They eat up every green blade or leaf, and thus destroy all the crops and trees. When the locusts came upon Egypt, Moses, at the king's request, prayed, and God sent a strong wind that swept them into the sea, where they perished in the water. The *ninth plague* was a horrible darkness for three days in all the land of Egypt. The *tenth plague*, the last, was the most terrible of all—the killing of the first-born in all the land of Egypt (Exodus xii.). God instructed Moses to tell the Israelites in the land that on a certain night they were to take a lamb in each family, kill it, and sprinkle its blood on the door-posts of their houses. They were then to cook the lamb and eat it standing, with their garments ready as for a journey (Exodus xii.). The lamb was called the paschal lamb, and was, after that, to be eaten every year, at about what is with us Easter-time, in commemoration of this event. That night God sent an angel through all the land, and he killed the first-born of man and beast in all the houses of the Egyptians. That is,

he killed the eldest son in the house; and if the father was the first-born in his father's family, he was killed also; and the same for the beasts. This was a terrible punishment. In the house of every Egyptian there were some dead, but not one in the houses of the Israelites; for when the angel saw the blood of the lamb on the door-posts, he passed over and did not enter into their houses, so that this event, called Pass-over or Pasch, was kept always as a great feast by God's people. This paschal lamb was a figure of our blessed Lord, for as its blood saved the Israelites from death, so Our Lord's blood saved and still saves us from eternal death in hell.

After that dreadful night Pharaoh allowed the people to depart with Moses; but when they had gone as far as the Red Sea, he was sorry he let them go, and set out with a great army to bring them back. There the people stood, with the sea before them and Pharaoh and his army coming behind them; but God provided for them a means of escape. At God's command, Moses stretched his rod over the sea, and the waters divided and stood like great walls on either side; and all the people passed through the opening in the waters, on the dry bed of the sea (Exodus xiv.).

Pharaoh attempted to follow them, but when he and his army were on the dry bed of the sea, between the two walls of water, God allowed the waters to close over them, and they were all drowned. Then the Israelites began the great journey through the desert, in which they travelled for forty years. During all that time God fed them with manna. He Himself, as a guide, went with them in a cloud, that shaded them from the heat of the sun during the day and was a light for them at night. But you will ask: Was the desert so large that it took forty years to cross it? No, but these people, notwithstanding all God had done for them, sinned against Him in the desert; so He permitted them to wander about through it till a new generation of people grew up, who were to be led into the promised land by Josue, the successor of Moses. From this we may learn a lesson for ourselves: God will always

punish those who deserve it, even though He loves them and may often have done great things to save them; but He will wait for His own time to punish.

The Israelites then, as I have said, went from every part of the land up to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch each year. It was during one of these celebrations that Our Lord was put to death, and during another feast that St. Peter preached to the people after Our Lord's death. He spoke only in one language, and yet all his hearers understood, for each heard his own language spoken (Acts of the Apostles ii. 6). This was called the gift of tongues, and was given to the Apostles when the Holy Ghost came upon them. For example, if each of you came from a different country and understood the language only of the country from which you came, and I gave the instructions only in English, then if every one thought I was speaking his language—German, French, Spanish, Italian, etc.,—and understood me, I would have what is called the gift of tongues, and it would be a great miracle, as it was when bestowed upon the apostles.

In the first ages of the Church God performed more miracles than He does now, because they are not now so necessary. These miracles were performed only to make the Church better known, and to prove that she was the true Church, with her power and authority from God. That can now be known and seen in Christian countries without miracles. These special gifts, like the gift of tongues, were given also to some of the early Christians by the Holy Ghost, when they received confirmation; but they were not a part of or necessary for confirmation, but only to show the power of the true religion. Those who heard St. Peter preach, when they went back to their own countries told what they had seen and heard, and thus their countrymen were prepared to receive the Gospel when the apostles came to preach it.

*** 98 Q.** How did the Holy Ghost come down upon the apostles?

A. The Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles in the form of tongues of fire.

99 Q. Who sent the Holy Ghost upon the apostles?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ sent the Holy Ghost upon the apostles.

100 Q. Why did Christ send the Holy Ghost?

A. Christ sent the Holy Ghost to sanctify His Church, to enlighten and strengthen the apostles, and to enable them to preach the Gospel.

“Sanctify,” to make more holy by the grace which He would give to the members of the Church. “To enlighten.” The apostles did not understand very well everything Our Lord taught while He was with them; but after the Holy Ghost came upon them they understood perfectly, and remembered many things which Our Lord said to them, and understood the true meaning of all. The prophets foretold that when the Messias, Christ, would come, He would bring all the world under His power. The prophets meant in a spiritual sense; but most of the people understood that He was to be a great general, with powerful armies, who would subdue all the nations of the earth, and bring them under the authority of the Jews. We know they thought that the great kingdom He was to establish upon earth would be a temporal kingdom, from many of their sayings and actions. One day the mother of two of Our Lord’s apostles came to ask Him if, when He had established His kingdom upon the earth, He would give her sons honorable positions in it, and place them high in authority (Matt. xx. 20). Our Lord told her she did not understand what she was asking. This shows that even some of the apostles—much less the people—did not understand the full nature of Our Lord’s mission upon earth, nor of His kingdom, the Church. Often too, when He preached to the people, the apostles asked Him on His return what His sermon meant (Luke viii. 9). But after the Holy

Ghost came, they were enlightened, and understood all without difficulty. "**Strengthen.**" I told you already that before the Holy Ghost came they were timid and afraid of being arrested, but that afterwards they went out boldly, and taught all they had learned from Our Lord. They were often taken prisoners and scourged, but it mattered not—they were firm in their faith, and could suffer anything for Christ after they had been enlightened and strengthened by the Holy Ghost. Finally, they were all, with the exception of St. John, put to death for their holy faith. St. Peter and St. Paul were crucified at Rome about the year 65, that is, about thirty-two years after the death of Our Lord. St. James was beheaded by order of King Herod. St. John lived the longest, and was the only one of the apostles who was not put to death, though he was cast into a large vessel of boiling oil, but was miraculously saved.

Certainly by dying for their faith the apostles showed that they were not impostors or hypocrites. They must really have believed what they taught, otherwise they would not have laid down their lives for it. They were certain of what they taught, as we saw when speaking of St. Thomas.

* 101 Q. Will the Holy Ghost abide with the Church forever?

A. The Holy Ghost will abide with the Church forever, and guide it in the way of holiness and truth.

"Abide" means to stay with us.