

## **COMMUNION FOR MISSION**

### **"Full of Grace"**

*Haven't we all had the experience sometimes of not seeing the obvious? Or as the English expression has it, 'not seeing the wood for the trees'? There are patterns or rhythms in our Scriptures that are easy to miss because our minds are focussed elsewhere as we read familiar stories and incidents. Familiarity may not always breed contempt but it may breed a certain blindness!*

*Here are some familiar scriptural passages – abbreviated somewhat to reveal more clearly patterns or rhythms that we may have missed before.*

1. "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness ...

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'" (Mark 1: 9-12, 14-15)

2. "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind ... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages ...

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one of them heard them speaking in the native language of each..." (Acts 2: 1-2, 4-6)

3. "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin ... The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings favoured one! The Lord is with you ... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you' ...

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth" (Luke 1: 26-28, 35, 39-40)

4. "Now as he (Saul) was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice ...

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God.' (Acts 9: 3-4, 19-20).

*After reading these passages I would hope you can now see the common pattern or rhythm that is emerging. In different ways and in different circumstances Jesus, the apostles, Mary and Paul all shared a similar experience. In every instance a personal encounter with God – a moment or a gift of grace (for grace is nothing more, nothing less than a profoundly personal presence of God in our lives!) – compelled that person to go out to someone else and share their experience. In brief, when God 'communes' with us He expects us to go out on mission. Communion is always for mission!*

*And so, to quote another English expression, 'we should be careful what we wish for'! Time and again in our prayers of petition we ask God to grant our requests. We ask for good health, success in exams, safe travels and many other such blessings. But have we ever stopped to think of the cost involved in receiving such blessings? Have we been aware of what our scriptures reveal to us? If we receive we must give. And the giving may be costly! There is no 'cheap grace'! No grace given is entirely for ourselves. We must share it so that the Kingdom of God will grow slowly but surely in our own lives, in our families, in our communities. If we approach God in prayer and ask for something that we want just for ourselves can we ever expect to have that prayer answered?*

*Sit with these texts I have shared for a while. Think about them. Think about the pattern, the rhythm hidden in them. You may even be surprised how quickly you think of other incidents in both the Old and New Testaments where grace works in the same way! Communion is always for mission!*

*This is the challenge we face when we pray for a blessing from God - if we are not prepared to go out to others can we expect God to come to us?*