

The Message for Ecumenical Bible Days 2018

“To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.”(Rev 21.6)

This year, the catchword of the Ecumenical Bible days is the passage from the Book of Revelation by St. John the Apostle and Evangelist:

“To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.”(Rev 21.6)

These words are uttered by “the One who sits upon the throne”(Rev 21.5), Jesus Christ, “The Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End”(Rev 21.6). The promise of the gift from the spring of the water of life introduces into the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The Angel invites the Apostle: „Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb”(Rev 21.9), after which he unfolds, in front of him, the view of the city of 12 wide-open gates, in which the temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb”(Rev 21.22). This city is the Church, one, holy, universal and apostolic, in which there is no faction nor dissention, and Christians united in their diversity will enjoy “the river of the water of life, bright as crystal” (Rev 22.1). This is Jesus’ thirst for His Church „that they may all be one, even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee” (J 17.21).

The same thirst vivifies us, Christians of different Churches and denominations, traditions and rituals. Jesus Christ comes to us such as we are in order to quench our thirst as “a gift from the spring of the water of life”. He himself knows best what the drama of thirst is. He experienced it on the Cross while at the time of His agony to “fulfil the Scripture”, He said: “I thirst!”(J 19.28).

Today, experiencing the drama of divisions and conflicts, we also call to Him: „I thirst!” And He comes to us with his Word so that also in our lives “the Scripture is fulfilled” (J 19.28). Jesus quenches our thirst with the water of life, which flows from the source which is the Bible. Francis, the bishop of Rome, encourages us to make „the Word of God worshiped more , better known and propagated in order to improve through It the understanding of the mystery of love, which comes from this source of mercy” (Misericordia et misera, 7). Indeed, it is the Word of God which is the source of mercy for us. Five hundred years ago Martin Luther stated in the same spirit: “The Gospel is the joyful message and proclamation full of comfort which neither accuses nor brings about fear, (...) [is] the edifying proclamation about grace and God’s kindness gained through Christ’s merit.” (On Law and Gospel, 6)

Providing us with the living water of His Word, the Lord calls us to respond to Him with our lives. Following reports about refugees and migrants who arrive in the southern coast of the European countries, it is impossible not to notice that their first need is water. Thanks to water they can survive; its lack brings about death. Looking at the tragedy of the people whom either wars or a desperate economic situation forced to set out on a journey to the unknown, let us recall the words of Jesus and refer them to our own lives: „And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.” (Mat 10.42)

Also in the times of the global concern about preservation and fair division of the earth resources, the question of access to water and its consumption is becoming the priority. Severe water deficit in the sub-Saharan areas and water pollution in the industrialized regions constitute a threat to millions of people on earth.

The same God, who in the Garden of Eden made the water spring in which originated four rivers (Gen 2.10), at Jacob’s water well provided a Samaritan woman with the spiritual “spring of water welling up to eternal life” (J 4.14). He also provides us, without our merits whatsoever, with a gift of the living water of His Word and His love in Jesus Christ.

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