

34 Pentecost Sunday Year C June 5, 2022
Acts 2:1-11 Psalm 104 1Corinthians 12:3-7,12-13 John 20:19-23

Today we are celebrating the *Feast of Pentecost* in which the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, enters the Upper Room like a roaring wind and descends with tongues of fire on the heads of the Apostles and the women gathered together in prayer. The immediate impact on the Apostles is radical and dramatic. The Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit are no longer afraid.

The Holy Spirit sends the Apostles out to the market place to begin the mission of the Catholic Church to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and to go forth and baptize people. They throw aside caution and no longer fear for their lives. They are excited to begin their mission of the Church, proclaiming their faith in Christ who was crucified and risen from the dead. They become *alive with the Holy Spirit*.

Speaking in *many languages*, the Apostles preach about all God has accomplished throughout the Scriptures beginning with Adam to Jesus. What happened on that day is the turning point in each of their lives and in the life of the newly founded Catholic Church itself.

Today's feast of Pentecost concludes the mission of the Son of God upon this earth in His humanity, but it marks the beginning of the life and mission of Christ in our Catholic Church that He founded. The Catholic Church is Christ's Body, His mystical Body, filled with the life of His Spirit. This Spirit is the *soul* of His Church. Through His Spirit, which fills the whole Church with life, love and truth, Christ is always faithful to His promise, "*Know that I am with you always until the end of the world.*"

In the First Reading, there is something much deeper in St. Luke's story of Pentecost, which we have yet to touch on, something which gives us the key to understanding almost everything in the New Testament. Luke begins his story by saying, "*When the day of Pentecost had come . . .*". *This is an important detail.*

The word Pentecost is not a name. In Greek, the word "*Pentecost*" means the number, *fifty*. Initially, Pentecost is the feast of the *first fruits*, an agricultural festival when the temple priests offered God a first harvest from the crops. It is called *Pentecost* because it is celebrated on the *fiftieth day after Passover*. Devout Jews from many nations gather in Jerusalem to celebrate it.

They also celebrate Pentecost to commemorate the giving of the *Ten Commandments* to Moses on top of Mount Sinai where God revealed Himself in *wind and fire*. It is on the basis of this *new Law* that God established a covenant with His people which made them a holy nation, a royal priesthood. This feast requires every Jewish man, woman and child to come to the Temple in Jerusalem. This explains the large crowd present there fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead.

In the First Reading, Luke brings out this link between this ancient Pentecost and the new Pentecost with details like fire and wind, details that remind us of God's appearance on Mount Sinai. Fifty days after the sacrifice of the Passover lamb marking the deliverance of the Hebrews from the Egyptians, *the finger of God* wrote the law on tablets of stone. Now, *fifty days* after the sacrifice of the *new Passover Lamb* on the Cross, Jesus, the finger of God, the Holy Spirit, writes the law again. Only this time it is written not on tablets of stone, but on the hearts of God's people.

The *new Pentecost* is the moment when Ezekiel's prophecy is fulfilled, "*A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you . . . I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances*" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Today this *new Law* of the Holy Spirit is written in our hearts through the receiving of the Sacraments. At Baptism, the priest pours water over our head and says, "*I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*" In this prayer, the person's body becomes the *Temple of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, the body becomes holy*. Baptism is portrayed in the New Testament as a sacred act of the Church by which the Holy Spirit is conferred.

The next Sacrament a person receives is Reconciliation or Confession. After Jesus rises from the dead, Jesus breathes on the Apostles and says to them, "*Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*" This Sacrament of Confession is also known as the Sacrament of Reconciliation because it is the Sacrament whereby we are forgiven of our sins and become reconciled with God.

The very centre of all the Sacraments is the Holy Eucharist. In the celebration of the Mass, the priest, in the person of Christ, holds his hands over the gifts of bread and

wine and prays, *“Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down Your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, which renews for us the sacrifice of our salvation, is the work of the Holy Spirit. After the memorial offering the priest prays to the Father, *“Humbly we pray that partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.”*

The Holy Spirit continues to be alive as later on the person receives the Sacrament of Confirmation, which completes their Baptism. The Bishop or priest prays and imposes his hands over the person. He then anoints the baptized person with Chrism oil on the forehead in the form of a cross, and says, *“Be Sealed with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.”* We are sealed with these seven gifts of the Holy Spirit at our Confirmation: *wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.*

The unity of the Catholic Church is the work of the Holy Spirit when the priest prays, *“Through Him and with Him, and in Him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is Yours, for ever and ever. Amen.”*

The Holy Spirit breathes life into us that empowers us to be right with God, with one’s true self, and with others. The Holy Spirit breathes in us *“Abba Father,”* making us His *children*. As children of God, we commit ourselves to people living, no longer in the flesh, but in the Holy Spirit. May we always be open and receptive to the Holy Spirit in our lives and live according to the teachings given to us by Jesus Christ.

On this special feast day of Pentecost, let us thank God for the gifts of the Holy Spirit that work in countless hidden ways to *deepen our faith, fill us with strength and inspiration, and renew our lives.* We may not feel the strong driving wind nor see tongues of fire, but the Holy Spirit is nevertheless here and dwelling among us. The Holy Spirit has given us many varied gifts in order to build up God’s kingdom.

Today, we pray this prayer with believers in our Catholic Church all through the world, *“Come, Holy Spirit, come into our hearts, come into our parishes, come into our homes, come into our communities, and renew the face of the earth with Your love and peace.”*