

Homily - Pentecost Sunday B 2018

We celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost and we share this message, “*Send forth Your Spirit, O Lord, and Renew the Face of the Earth!*” For the Old Testament People, Pentecost was the culmination of their Harvest Feast of Weeks, occurring on the fiftieth day, seven weeks, after the Passover (cf. Deut 16:9-10; Num 28:26). For us, the New Israel, it is about the descent of the Holy Spirit, fifty days after the Passover Sacrifice of the Lamb – the Harvest Feast, not of Wheat or Barley, but of Souls; the restoration of our broken relationship with God. Thus, Pentecost is the blessing of new life in the spirit, a new beginning, a new dawn. Accordingly, let us turn to God, praying in song, for a renewal of Pentecost anointing upon us (cf. Luke 11:13): “*Send Your Spirit! (x4); Send Your Power! (x4); Send Your Anointing! (x4).*” May the Holy Spirit renew families, marriages, relationships, prayer life, all our endeavors, and the entire face of the earth, through Christ our Lord. Amen!

Our First Reading (Acts 1:1-11) relates the First Christian Pentecost, the historical Pentecost: “*When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together.*” What an awesome manifestation of the Holy Spirit at the Upper Room in Jerusalem! It was, so to speak, the first ever “precision guided” event in history – God “breaking into” and “exploding” His love, anointing and power in the Upper Room; no other buildings adjacent to this location were affected: “*a noise like a strong driving wind [like hurricanes or tornadoes]... filled the entire house [but not destructive; nothing shattered]. Then there*

appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them [Again, there was no cause for alarm; they didn’t have to dial 911 to invite the Fire Fighters to come to the rescue (cf. Exod 4:1-3)]. And [the disciples] were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues.” Wow! The disciples had just witnessed another Mystery of Divine Condescension, this time, not in terms of God becoming man; but God manifesting His Holy Spirit in sacramental forms, in lowly ways, we can handle: powerful but harmless wind and tongues of fire!

Beloved, let not this spectacular event become merely a historical recollection. This is also about “*anamnesis*” (remembrance) in the Biblical sense. Just as since the First Christian Passover, Jesus said, “*Do this in remembrance of me;*” since the First Christian Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1), the Church was led by the Spirit to celebrate and relive that singular event of the Descent of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 20:16; 1Cor 16:8). It is the birthday of the Church; the great inauguration of the work of evangelization in spirit and power. Therefore, mindful that we too have received Pentecost anointing with the Holy Spirit at Confirmation, each one of us is invited to relive the experience anew. Just as we renew our Baptismal promises every Easter (Passover Feast), every Pentecost marks a renewal of the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Let us, therefore, enter personally into the Pentecost mystery anew. God has special and inexhaustible gifts for us; no one will return home empty. St. Peter says, “*Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you*” (1Pet 1:13).

The significance of the Holy Spirit for evangelization of the world – the renewal of the world – cannot be overstressed. Jesus says, “*You shall be my witnesses*” (Acts 1:8). Obviously, we cannot do it alone; we need the Holy Spirit. In the words of Jesus, “*The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you*” (John 14:26). Indeed, as stated in our Second Reading (1Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13), “*No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.*” Little wonder Pope Paul VI says, “*The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization*” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 75; cf. Luke 4:18-19). It follows that the Church’s testimony, witness or teaching is always a testimony in union with the Holy Spirit (cf. John 15:26-27; it should never be denigrated as opinionated, judgmental or negative. Please, always remember, the Church alone is Christ’s officially designated witness on issues of faith and morals (cf. Matt 28:20), not the media, scholars, psychologists, politicians, or opinion polls.

On the whole, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of authentic diversity! As articulated in the Second Reading: “*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit... different forms of service but the same Lord... different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.*” Consider the diverse gifts of languages in our First Reading: “*of the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt Libya near Cyrene... from*

Rome, Cretans and Arabs, [Latin, English, Spanish, Creole]”, etc. Some people dislike any language they do not understand. On the contrary, Pentecost calls us to celebrate languages as gifts of the Holy Spirit. The variety of languages becomes a blessing of a united and formidable evangelizing front, proclaiming “*the mighty acts of God*” (Acts 2:1-11). Indeed, “*All are welcome (x3) in this place!*” Please, “*Do not quench the Spirit*” (1Thess 5:19); never allow political and cultural sentiments to distort our Life in the Spirit. Never be upset about “*Bilingual,*” or “*Multicultural*” celebrations. At Babel, the manifestation of languages was offensive and divisive (cf. Gen 11:1-9); at Pentecost’, a reversal of Babel happened in a more fundamental way: not just gift of languages for regular communication, but more importantly gift of languages of prayer and praise, counsel for wisdom, consolation of the afflicted or the bereaved and of preaching for conversion, etc. Always live in the moment of Pentecost!

Finally, our Gospel Passage (John 20:19-23) shows the Holy Spirit is the spirit of oneness and love, the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation, the spirit of peace and serenity; let us always yield to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. And let us invite the Spirit in song: “*Come, Holy Spirit, we need You; Come, Holy Spirit, we pray; Come with Your Strength and Your Power; Come In Your own special way!*” Brothers and sisters, “*Receive the Holy Spirit! Receive the Anointing from on high! Be filled with the Gift of the Holy Spirit!*” May God refresh you with His “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,*” through Christ our Lord. Amen.