

## Homily - Pentecost Sunday C

Beloved we celebrate Pentecost Sunday. Each year at this time, God offers us the opportunity for “a new *Pentecost*.” We are not simply recalling the Pentecost event that took place almost 2000 years ago. We are actually marking the presence of the Holy Spirit among us in a special way today. Our Gospel passage (Jn 14:15-16, 23b-26) shows that Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit, the “Advocate, to be with you always”, not for just a time. Since the first Pentecost, He is with us daily, weekly, monthly and yearly, until the end (Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1Cor 16:8).

Our First Reading (Acts 2:1-11) narrates how the “breath of God” came suddenly “from the sky” like a noise of “a strong driving wind”. It could have manifested in a hurricane-like wind but it did not destroy; it only brought life, grace, anointing and strength. “Tongues of fire” also appeared and rested on each one of them. Again, the fire here could have appeared like regular fire, but it was not destructive. It reminds us of the fire that Moses encountered in the passage about the “Burning Bush”. “The bush was burning, yet it was not consumed” (Exod 3:2). And Moses said, “I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt” (Exod 3:3). It was the fire of God’s “divine love” reaching out to save his people. And so we pray, “Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful; and kindle in them the fire of divine love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be recreated and you will renew the face of the earth.”

Pentecost, beloved, was the culmination of the revelation of God himself and of our new identity. We have already known about the Father and the Son. Today, both the wind and fire signify the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. Thus, at Pentecost the Most Holy Trinity is fully revealed. We become part of the same mystery through baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). We are born again in Spirit and in truth, and we truly become the sons and daughters of God. God is the Supreme Spirit; and “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6).

Pentecost is about our new creation. In Genesis Chapter Two, “the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen 2:7). In like manner, after Jesus had laid the foundation and erected the structural framework of his Church, he ascended into heaven. Pentecost was God’s breathing upon the Church “the breath of life” and it has become a living structure. Hence, St. Peter says to us, “like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house” (1Pet 2:5).

The Church is truly alive in the Spirit of God; the gates of hell cannot kill it (Matt 16:18).

The miracle of Pentecost also was the reversal of the “event” of the Tower of Babel. Through the pride of the world at the beginning, “the LORD confused the language of all ... and... scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth” (Gen 11:9). Now, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has inspired many languages to proclaim unity in one faith. The “divided” peoples of the world, with different languages and cultures are now made one people of God, one Church, and a spiritual house. All racial, ethnic, tribal or personal conflicts and misunderstanding typical of “Babel” have been resolved through the Spirit. As our Second Reading (1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13) rightly points out, “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.” We thank God for the multilingual and cultural endowments in our diocese and parish community.

Pentecost teaches us that the Holy Spirit can help us do great and unimaginable things. The apostles and other disciples (men and women) with them in the upper room (cf. Acts 1:12-14) never studied these different languages but through the Holy Spirit, they spoke them: languages of the Parthians, Medes, Cretans, Mesopotamians, Asians, Egyptians, Libyan, Romans, etc. Some Scholars often insinuate that the apostles spoke only one language and the people heard them in different languages. Beloved, that is not what the passage says. It says they “began to speak in different tongues.” The Spirit gave them the gift of tongues and the people that gathered actually heard them speaking different languages and said, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language?”

Finally, “No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.” Pentecost challenges us to become true witnesses to the values Christ has commended to us. We can do this through the Spirit. Christians can make this world a better place. The values of peace, forgiveness and love are becoming “old school” in today’s world. We also need solidarity and fraternity, a greater love of prayer, a greater willingness to serve, and a greater love of the Church of the Living God.