

Solemnity of Pentecost

May 19, 2024

Today we celebrate the solemnity of Pentecost, a remembering of that day long ago when the Spirit, the third person of the Blessed Trinity was poured out into the hearts and minds of those first believers. Once they received the Spirit, they went out boldly and preached to all in Jerusalem and elsewhere.

Aware that they did not fully understand everything he said, Jesus promised the guidance of the Holy Spirit. “I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth.”

The Holy Spirit is called the Advocate, literally meaning Called-to-your-help. Advocate is the Latin translation of the Greek word, Paraclete. Before his Ascension, the Risen Lord instructed the Apostles to gather together in prayer. And so all the apostles gathered in prayer with Mary in the Upper Room, awaiting the promised event.

Today is also the birthday of the Church because it was on this day that the church which began in the Upper Room became public or was outdoor. Pentecost which means fiftieth was the second of three most important Jewish Feasts. For the Jews it was a day of gratitude and a day of thanksgiving for the completion of the harvest. It occurred seven weeks after the Passover and on this day the first fruits of the wheat crop were offered to God. On this day the Jewish people also celebrated the event where God gave his Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. It was on such great and festive occasion that God chose to pour the Spirit down on the Apostles and the church was born.

On this fiftieth day after the resurrection this great transformation took place in the small group of the apostles. They were persons perplexed, scared, frightened and disappointed, that kept them closeted in a little upper room. The Spirit descended on them while they were together praying and waiting.

My dear people of God what makes you tick? For people of faith, there can really only be one answer. And you know what it is. What makes us tick? God. It's as simple and as profound as that. And I'm not talking about just a few. Or only certain groups. Or certain faiths. No, God is what makes every human person "tick", believer and nonbeliever alike. God holds each of us in being. God sustains us. God guides us. God speaks to us through our consciences. God helps us know what is good and right and true and life-giving. And God gives meaning to it all. And for all – no exceptions

For Catholics (and other Christians of course) we call this the Holy Spirit, the living God whom we celebrate this day of Pentecost. We give voice to this truth in our Creed and in our prayers and in our teachings. We do our best to express and articulate the seemingly inexpressible, by using simple human words such as wisdom and understanding and counsel and fortitude and knowledge and piety and fear of the Lord to describe the countless (almost indescribable) ways the Spirit of God shapes our hearts and minds and souls.

And so we gather this day to give glory to the Holy Spirit, to worship the Holy Spirit, and to declare our profound belief in something and someone we often struggle to get our minds around, let us not forget that God is God after all, and we are not. But it doesn't end there. You see, if we really want to give glory to the Spirit of God, we can't simply do it in words. That's not enough. Rather we need to strive to embrace at the very least, two things.

First, we need to open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit in such a way that all these other things that sometimes motivate us, that make us "tick" so-to-speak, take a backseat to the Spirit of God who wants to become fully alive within us, the Holy Spirit who wants nothing more than to shape what we say and think and do, shape how we see the world and one another that is, wants nothing more than to be our everything.

And secondly, if we want to give glory to the Holy Spirit, we need to recognize the Living God as the one thing common to every human

person, and (in a very intimate and explicit way) the life-giving reality shaping the life of every Christian. This deep truth, that God dwells in and is at work in every man and woman in every corner of this world is what trumps all of our differences. And not barely, but resoundingly. Our differences are a gift from our incredible God. That much is certainly true. And we need to believe it deeply. But when we struggle to, and we will, let's never forget the treasure we have in common, the one thing (one person) who connects us in ways we can't even think of or imagine. The one who helps us to be the best version of ourselves.

My dear friends in Christ, this feast of Pentecost that we celebrate today rounds off the tremendous mysteries that we have been commemorating since Holy Week - the Passion, the Death, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of Jesus. This feast culminates in the sending of the Spirit of the Father and the Son on his disciples. This feast indicates the extraordinary intervention of God into our lives by which Jesus makes us partakers in the mystery of the Trinity.

Today's feast indicates that it is an on-going reality, not a day or a weekend event, which still touches our lives every single day. This week, as we reflect on the purpose of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in our individual's life, let's know that the Spirit guides and teaches us according to the purpose for which he has been sent.

So let's allow God's Spirit to do what he wants to do, make us the beautiful, loving, compassionate people God created us and died for us to be. After all it's God who makes us tick.

Come Holy Spirit! Come!