

Solemnity of Pentecost

June 8, 2025

What makes you tick?

If I polled each of you and myself, I'd almost certainly get a wide variety of answers. Some of us need all sorts of people around us all the time, while some of us need lots and lots of time to be alone. Some of us want our days packed from sun-up to sundown with countless activities, while some of us love having absolutely nothing on our schedule. Some want to be close to family, some want a little more distance.

Some like the competitive nature of our society, and some wish we could get out of the rat-race. Some of us need black and white answers to things, while some of us like things to be more nuanced, more gray, less defined. And some of us "need" more money than others, or power, or popularity, while some of us are okay with having much less – less wealth and less notoriety.

I guess we are all different. So many different likes and dislikes. So many different personalities. So many different ways of relating to others. So many different goals and priorities. So many different strengths and weaknesses. And so I guess it's safe for me to say that there really can't be one answer to the question, "What makes us tick?" one answer that fits us all.

Or can there? Or more importantly, should there be?

My dear friends, one of the tragedies of humanity (if you'll permit me to use such strong language) is our obsession with our differences. And I don't mean in a good way, I don't mean that we have an obsession with "celebrating" or "appreciating" our differences. (Although we sometimes do give lip-service to it, or embrace it in a half-hearted way at times.) No, the sad truth is that a great deal of the time we use our differences in a negative way, to separate and divide, to categorize and give labels to, to

blame or scapegoat or demean or disparage. At times we even use our differences as an excuse to hate.

And the ONE THING that we all share in common somehow gets ignored, gets forgotten, gets dismissed. I guess it's easier to give-in to the ugly parts of ourselves and find reasons not to be kind, not to forgive, not to show compassion, not to be generous, not to trust and not to love. ONLY focusing on our differences can sometimes lead us down that path. Humankind has been doing this for a very long time, playing the "us" vs. "them" game. And it gets us nowhere. And gains us nothing. But we do it anyway.

What makes you tick?

For us men and women 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" - believers and nonbelievers 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. God is God after all, and

unfortunately 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 or one person who connects us in ways we can't even imagine.

In light of that, what else really matters? **Come Holy Spirit! Come!**