

Pentecost - C
Acts 2:1-11;
Romans 8:8-17;
John 14:15-16, 23b-26
Little Flower - 5-15-16

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, often called the birthday of the Church. Today we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. Each of the readings gives us insight into the role of the Holy Spirit in us as individuals and as a Church.

Before his Ascension, Jesus told the apostles, “*Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature*” [Mk. 16:15]. Today’s reading from Acts demonstrates that the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles to proclaim the Gospel. The Holy Spirit, then, is an empowering Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live and proclaim the Gospel in word and deed.

In his Letter to the Romans, St. Paul describes the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of adoption. It is the Holy Spirit living in each of us who makes us sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters of one another. It is the Holy Spirit, then, who makes us one family in the Church.

Today’s Gospel refers to the Holy Spirit as the Advocate who will teach us everything and remind us of all that Jesus told us. The Holy Spirit reminds us as individuals and as a Church of the teachings of Jesus, helps us come to deeper insight into them, and often inspires us with the right words to share them with others.

Finally, the Holy Spirit is a unifying Spirit. In today’s reading from Acts, when the Apostles spoke, all the people heard them speak in their own language, uniting peoples “*from every nation, race, people, and tongue*” [Rev. 14:7]. The Holy Spirit, then, not only makes us one family but also unites us in faith, hope, and, most importantly, love.

My brothers and sisters, today I would like offer a brief reflection on one chapter of our parish history. If we want to know where a parish is going, we have to understand from where it is coming.

Among the pastors who had the greatest impact on Little Flower parish was Fr. John Riedinger, Little Flower’s third pastor. Fr. John served as pastor of Little Flower from 1942 to 1966. Therefore, he was the longest-serving pastor of Little Flower. Fr. John was the builder: he built the church, the rectory, and the convent, converted the old church into a gym and auditorium, and expanded the school twice.

Fr. John was born on May 15, 1882. Therefore, during his years as pastor, May 15 was an important day in the parish. For us as school children, it meant a free day, a half day, or, at least, extra recess. On May 15, 1962, his 80th birthday, the steeple was placed on our beautiful new church. It took two tries. The first time it was turned the wrong direction. The 75-foot steeple continues to help make our church the centerpiece of our community. It was fifty years ago today, Sunday, May 15, 1966, that Fr. John retired as pastor of Little Flower on his 84th birthday. *The Criterion* article announcing his retirement was titled “Father John’s retirement marks the end of an era.”

As we celebrate Pentecost, let us be grateful for all the parishioners, sisters, and priests who, led by the Holy Spirit, helped make our parish the parish it is today and pray for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our parish as we continue our journey to the kingdom.