

Pentecost - B
Acts 2:1-11;
Galatians 5:16-25;
John 15:26-27; 16:12-15
Little Flower - 5/24/15

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost. The word *Pentecost* comes from Greek and literally means 50th day. Pentecost is the 50th day of Easter.

At the Last Supper, Jesus told the apostles, “*But now I am going to the one who sent me...But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you*” [Jn. 16:5a & 7]. According to Jesus in today’s Gospel, the Advocate is “*the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father.*” Today, then, we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and upon the Church.

Fr. Jean Galot, my Christology professor, once said that when Jesus returned in glory, his coming would be dramatic. However, the great revelation would be that he has been with us all along. Certainly the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was dramatic: a strong driving wind, tongues of fire, speaking in different tongues. More than dramatic, the coming of the Holy Spirit was transformative. Timid, fearful disciples were transformed into bold, courageous apostles who went out and proclaimed the Gospel.

The same transformative Holy Spirit came upon us at our baptism and our confirmation and continues to live within us. In today’s reading from Galatians, St. Paul challenges us: “*If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.*” What does this mean?

In today’s Gospel, Jesus said, “*When he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.*” If we allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit of Jesus, we will be truth seekers, i.e., men, women, and children who are always searching for truth in every area of life, especially the truth about God, the truth about ourselves, and the truth about God’s plan for us. Ultimately, we will be led to Jesus who said, “*I am the way and the truth and the life*” [Jn. 14:6a].

Today’s Gospel also suggests that we are called to be Christ’s witnesses to the world, i.e., to testify to him. Like the apostles, we have been empowered to speak and act boldly and courageously. What I think this means for us today is that we have to be willing to be identified as Christians and Catholics and to live our faith and Gospel values whatever the cost. A couple of weeks ago, I mentioned that one of the qualities of the early Christians that drew people to Christ was their willingness to die for their faith. Most of the time, the biggest risk we face for speaking and acting boldly and courageously is the risk of becoming unpopular.

Finally, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul contrasts the works of sin with the works of the Spirit. As children, we learned the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit or the effects of the Holy Spirit living in us and us living in the Spirit. They include the nine listed by Paul: “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*” The tradition of the Church also includes goodness, modesty, and chastity. When people see the fruits of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, in our lives, we testify to Christ far more powerfully than by anything we say.

My brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit is transformative. However, we have to allow ourselves to be transformed. Pentecost calls us to open ourselves to the presence, power, and activity of the Holy Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit living within us is closer to us than we are to ourselves and calls forth the best in us from within.