

Pentecost - C
Acts 2:1-11;
Romans 8:8-17;
John 14:15-16, 23b-26
Little Flower - 5/19/13

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate Pentecost Sunday. On the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. Our Christian feast of Pentecost comes on the 50th day of Easter. Each of the three readings gives us an insight into the workings of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the Church.

In today's Gospel, Jesus told his disciples, "*Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.*" What does it mean to say that the Holy Spirit lives within us? Someone once wrote, "There is within me someone who is closer to me than I am to myself." Another wrote, "There is within me someone who knows me better than I know myself." If the best test of love or friendship is that the two people consistently call forth the best in each other, the Holy Spirit living within us calls forth the best in us from within.

The second theme in today's readings comes from Paul's Letter to the Romans: "*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*" The Holy Spirit lives within us, but he is not a passive presence within us. He wants to lead us; he wants to guide us. One of the ways he leads and guides us is through the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. In John's Gospel, Jesus said, "*The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit*" [3:8]. This passage has always intrigued me. It suggests that the Holy Spirit often leads us where we do not plan to go.

Today's reading from Acts describes the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. Immediately after the coming of the Holy Spirit, the apostles left the locked upper room and began proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The coming of the Holy Spirit broke the chains of fear that were holding them bound and instilled them with a passion for sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. Last week I mentioned Pope Francis' call to evangelize and re-evangelize and serve the needs of those on the peripheries. As Catholics, this has not been our best suit. Most Catholics are not that passionate about sharing the Gospel outside our families and the parish.

My brothers and sisters, throughout our lives, we have been encouraged to have a personal relationship with God the Father and with Jesus. The image of Father speaks to all of us, so we find it easy to relate to God as Father. Likewise, since Jesus was like us in all things but sin, since he was fully human as well as fully divine, since he became one of us and lived among us, we find it easy to relate to him. However, we do not always find it so easy to relate to the Holy Spirit, and the Church has not done as much to encourage us to relate to the Holy Spirit. For example, last week I mentioned that in some ways the pre-Vatican II Liturgy was more visual, more dramatic, than the Vatican II Liturgy. In the pre-Vatican II Liturgy, Pentecost had an octave. In other words, the Church extended the celebration of Pentecost for eight days. Notwithstanding, in our prayer, we should try to develop a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. The bottom line is that the Holy Spirit is closer to us than we are to ourselves, knows us better than we know ourselves, and calls forth the best in us from within.