

Pentecost - C
Acts 2:1-11;
Roman 8:8-17;
John 14:15-16, 23b-26
Little Flower - 6/9/19

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and upon the Church fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. Therefore, today we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Today's reading from Romans and today's Gospel help us understand the Holy Spirit living and working in us. In today's reading from Romans, we are told that the Holy Spirit is life giving, making us adopted sons and daughters of God. St. Paul makes it clear that he was not writing metaphorically. Through the Holy Spirit living within us, "*we cry 'Abba, Father!'*" *Abba* suggests intimacy. *Abba* is the term Jesus himself used to address his Father. Today's Gospel tells us that the Holy Spirit is our Advocate before God and others. He also will be our teacher helping us grow in our knowledge of God.

However, it is today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles that reveals the deepest meaning of Pentecost. Before ascending, Jesus told the apostles, "*And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high*" [Lk. 24:49]. In today's reading we are told, "*And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were.*" A "strong driving wind" is a symbol of power. The Holy Spirit, then, is a spirit of power. The Holy Spirit has the power to change minds, hearts, and lives.

However, the image of wind also reminds us of what Jesus said to Nicodemus: "*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*" [Jn. 3:8]. Because the Holy Spirit is power, this verse suggests we cannot limit or control the workings of the Holy Spirit.

"*Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them.*" Fire represents passion. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, is a passionate spirit. The Holy Spirit wants to ignite the followers of Jesus to be passionate about living the Gospel of Jesus. However, the tongues of fire also suggest that the Holy Spirit wants to ignite the followers of Jesus to be passionate about sharing the Gospel of Jesus with others.

Finally, the apostles began to speak in different languages so that all who heard them heard them in their own language and, therefore, could understand what the apostles were saying. This is a powerful message for us today. We have to speak to people in their own language. I do not mean English, Spanish, or Chinese. We have to translate the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church into language that people understand today. For example, at a priest retreat, Fr. Keith Hosey made the point that in the United States and Western Europe, most people speak psychology. In other words, they think and speak in psychological categories. His point was that if we want people today to hear the Gospel, we have to speak in those categories as well.

My brothers and sisters, Pope Francis is constantly reminding us that the Church is called to be a missionary Church. The questions I posed last week all pertain to the Church as missionary. Unfortunately, too many Catholic and Christians do not understand that they are called to be missionary disciples. They want to be the Church of yesterday where the Church was always present and people came to Church to be nourished by Word and Sacrament rather than be the Church of today where every Catholic and Christian is called to go out and share the Good News of Jesus. In the past, people primarily shared their faith within their own homes and families. Today we are all called to be missionary disciples to those in our various circles of influence and to those on the margins.