

Pentecost - A  
Acts 2:1-11;  
I Corinthians 12:3b-78, 12-13;  
John 20:19-23  
Little Flower - 5/31/20

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. When Jesus ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of God, he was empowered to send the promised Holy Spirit.

Today's reading from Acts tells the story of the first Pentecost. *"Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit..."* The apostles then went out and began to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are told that all those who were listening heard the apostles speaking in their own languages.

Today's reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians provides a theological explanation of the meaning of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the soul or life principle of the Church. Therefore, because we all share the one Spirit, all of us are one family in the Holy Spirit. If this is true, all Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore, we need to respect, love, and cherish all of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

During COVID-19, we need to be reminded of this. We are a fractured nation; we are a fractured Church. Notwithstanding all the international, national, and local restrictions and all the self isolating, self quarantining, and self-distancing, we are all still brothers and sisters in Christ. As we keep hearing, we are all in this together. What happens to others needs to be important to us!

St. Paul also reminds us that all gifts, human and divine, come from God. As Paul wrote, *"To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit."* According to a different translation, *"the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good"* [NAB, 1970]. In other words, all the gifts God has given us have been given to us not just for our benefit but to be shared with others. If cable news tends to focus on what divides us, many local news stories have focused on people sharing their gifts with others during the pandemic. We might all want to ask what gifts we have that we should and could be sharing in these times.

Finally, like last Sunday, today's Gospel points us forward. At the Last Supper Jesus said, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you"* [Jn. 14:27]. Therefore, when Jesus appeared to the disciples, he first bestowed his peace upon them. He then sent them out to proclaim the Gospel and instituted the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The heart of Jesus' Gospel was that the only true salvation, the only true freedom, is salvation and freedom from sin which he won for us by his passion, death, and resurrection.

The death of George Floyd and its aftermath of violence reminds us of this important truth. Therefore, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have to continue to proclaim the coming of God's kingdom in Christ and call people to conversion, repentance, and freedom from sin.

My brothers and sisters, these last few weeks I have mentioned adaptability several times in homilies. Today we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church and upon us. Because of all the changes that the pandemic has wrought and because our nation and our Church are fractured, we really need a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us this year, a new Pentecost. As the Church continues to reopen, we need to be passionate in believing, passionate in loving and serving others, and passionate in hope. Although the Church is reopening, it is also changing. Some of these changes may be temporary; some may be permanent. We have to adapt as we continue to live as brothers and sisters of one another in Christ and continue to share our gifts with others through evangelization and service.