

Pentecost - B
Acts 2:1-11;
Galatians 5:16-25;
John 15:26-27; 16:12-15
Little Flower - 5/23/21

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost. On the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. Our Christian feast of Pentecost comes on the 50th day of Easter.

Today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles tells the story of the first Pentecost. Prior to Pentecost, the disciples secluded themselves in the upper room out of fear. Our experience with COVID helps us understand their experience. Because of COVID and quarantines, many of us sheltered in place in fear. To understand their experience of Pentecost, we need to look at the images used to describe the coming of the Spirit: "*a noise like a strong driving wind*" and "*tongues as of fire.*"

When we think of fire, we think of passion. When we think of passion, we think of love and energy. After the Holy Spirit came upon them, the apostles immediately became passionate about sharing their faith. We need this same passion in the Church today. Having received the same Holy Spirit at our baptism and confirmation, we need to be passionate about our faith and passionate about sharing our faith with others. In other words, we need to fall in love with Jesus and the Gospel.

When we think of a driving wind, we think of power. As you may remember from last Sunday, before he ascended, Jesus told his disciples, "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.*" [Acts 1:8]. In John's Gospel, Jesus used the analogy of the wind: "*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]. Pentecost empowered the disciples to go out and proclaim the Gospel to all creation. Our baptism and confirmation empowers us to do the same.

When the apostles spoke on Pentecost, all the people heard them in their own language. This suggests three things. The Holy Spirit calls the Church to be inclusive rather than exclusive. The Church must open its doors wide. Also, to proclaim the Gospel effectively, the Church has to speak in the languages of its listeners. Without changing the message of God's Word, we have to speak that Word in a way that makes it understandable and relevant to people today. Third, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, today's reading reminds us that love is the universal language. We will be able to proclaim the Good News of Jesus only to the extent that we proclaim it in love.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who will lead us to all truth. I would suggest that many problems and divisions in the Church and the world today are because everyone has his or her own truth. If we allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit of Jesus, we will be truth seekers, searching for truth in every area of life, especially the truth about God, ourselves, and 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], and we will be witnesses to His truth.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul lists nine fruits of the Holy Spirit, i.e., effects of the Holy Spirit living in us. 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.