

Pentecost - C  
Acts 2:1-11;  
I Corinthians 12:3b-7; 12-13;  
John 14:15-16,  
Little Flower - 6/5/22

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost. In today's reading from Acts, we heard, "*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 and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.*"

The Holy Spirit came upon them as tongues of fire. Why tongues of fire? Fire can symbolize many different things, but one thing it symbolizes is passion. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles became passionate about sharing the Good News of Jesus. Passion is important in the life and ministry of the church. In last Sunday's homily, I focused on the need for engagement in the parish. Therefore, please look into your hearts and try to discern what you are passionate about in the life of the church and to volunteer for that ministry. We are blessed with a great staff and great parishioners. However, for our ministries to really be effective, we need passionate, engaged people to lead them.

My favorite verse from today's reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians is "*To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.*" An alternate translation of this verse is "*To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good*" [NAB, 1970]. In other words, all our gifts are given not simply for our own good but for the good of all. Therefore, we need to identify our gifts and talents and then look for ways to share them.

Second, the Holy Spirit not only ignited passion in the disciples but also made them fearless in proclaiming the Gospel in an often hostile world. Courage is also important in the life and ministry of the Church. Since the 1950's, we have seen tremendous changes in the world and the Church. Our society has become secularized. Fewer Catholics attend Mass regularly. Many Catholics have left the church and joined fundamental or evangelical churches or quit church altogether.

Because of this, many Catholics, including some leaders of the Church, unlike Pope Francis, have become afraid of the present and the future. Their solution is to race headlong into the past. They believe that if we could re-create the Catholicism of the 1950's, all would be well. However, if we choose that course, the disconnect between the Church and world will only grow, and we will be unable to fulfill the Gospel mandate to proclaim the Good News to all creation. I quote once again the words of Aelred Cody, "Among the constant, necessary concerns of all committed members of the Church is that of remaining faithful to our origins and to the purpose for which we exist, while adapting ourselves institutionally and individually to the requirements of our own times."<sup>1</sup>

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? Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, what this means is that Jesus is closer to us now than he ever was to the people of his own time. Likewise, because we share the same Spirit, we are more connected with each other than Jesus' apostles and disciples were connected with each other during his lifetime. In fact, as Fr. Jean Galot suggested, the great revelation when Jesus returns in glory will be that he has really been with us all along.

My brothers and sisters, the traditional prayer to the Holy Spirit should be our prayer today: "Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth."

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<sup>1</sup>Aelred Cody, "The Foundation of the Church: Biblical Criticism for Ecumenical Discussion," *Theological Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, March, 1973, p. 1.