

Homily for Pentecost Sunday
June 9, 2019
By Deacon Nick Thompson

Much like an artist's view of beauty: When a car collector looks at an old rusted car or when a farmer looks at the fertile dirt of an abandoned field or when a carpenter looks at the wood flooring of a hundred year old house about to be torn down, they see the life and energy within what seems to most of us a rusted heap of metal, a field of weeds or an eyesore taking up good space. Artisans regardless of form or trade seem to see and appreciate the spirit of what once was, while at the same time seeing the spirit and beauty of the old being renewed, replanted, or reshaped into something new. They see something worth being harvested and given new value. However, they also know that time is an enemy and every minute counts if they are to succeed in restoring life.

In the time of Christ, Pentecost was referred to as the Feast of Weeks or Sukkoth. It was held 50 days after Passover. It marked the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest. Once the grain was ripe time was of the essence. After harvest, people from all round gathered at the Temple in Jerusalem to offer to God the best of their grains. It was a time of thanksgiving to God for the gifts given in harvest, for the food that sustained life. We gather today, to

thank God for all the different kinds of spiritual gifts, the different forms of service, the different workings, the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, which bring about the renewal, replanting, reshaping of human souls into God's work of art, the harvest of souls that continually sustain the Body of Christ in heaven and on earth.

We celebrate the birth of the Church and we celebrate the wedding feast of the Lamb, which is Christ's marriage to the Church. Pentecost marks the consummation of Christ's Marriage to his Church, the full completeness of God's gift to mankind. At Christmas, God presents to us as gift His only begotten Son, Jesus, who is The Mediator, The Bridge connecting humanity and divinity. Christ removes the rust of sin from our souls, prepares our ground for planting and refinishes our interior selves. During Holy Week, Jesus, by His Passion, offers Himself up entirely for us, even to death on a cross. He bathes us, purifies us and sanctifies us in the gift of His Blood. He clears the barren fields of our hearts and sows the seeds of virtue; faith, hope and charity. At Easter, Christ rises, and His Resurrection, as well as His Ascension, fulfill the pledge of our glorification, make legitimate our birthright, through the waters of Baptism, to the Kingdom of God. He goes before us to His Father's house to prepare a place for us, for in Him and with Him, we have become a part of the Divine family; we

have become children of God, destined for eternal beatitude. Christ through the cross, his tree of death, reshapes us into a tree of life.

But the gift of God to mankind does not end there; after ascending into heaven, Jesus, in union with The Father, sends us His Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The Father and the Holy Spirit love us to the point of giving us Jesus, the Word, in the incarnation; the Father and the Word so love us as to give us the Holy Spirit. Thus, the three Persons of the Trinity give Themselves to mankind. They stoop to us in our poor nothingness to redeem us from sin, to sanctify us, to reshape our souls and to bring us into Their own intimacy. Such is God's love for us, poured out by the Holy Spirit like the grain at the harvest shook up, packed down, overflowing in its abundance.

The divine reconfiguration of our souls reaches its climax in the gift of the Holy Spirit. We sing, "When you send forth your Spirit we are created, and you renew the face of the earth!" The Holy Spirit, the very breath of mutual love forever exhaled from the eternal relationship of the Father with the Son is given to our souls solely through the infinite merits of Jesus, so that He, the Holy Spirit, can complete the work of our sanctification, can totally renovate us, can make of us fertile fields, can make us saints.

By his descent upon the Apostles under the form of tongues of fire, the Holy Spirit shows us how He, the Spirit of love, is given to us in

order to transform us by His charitable love, and having transformed us, to lead us back to God. In fact, Paul tells us no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Now this gift of Holy Spirit can and should increase within us; the Holy Spirit is a permanent yet continual giving, an eternal exhale. Our soul received its' first breath of Holy Spirit when we were baptized; it was renewed later, confirmed in a special way by the Sacrament of Confirmation the sacrament which is in fact the Pentecost of every Christian soul. Each time we accomplish an act of charity the Holy Spirit gives Himself again to the soul more completely and more profoundly. Each time we answer the divine invitation to love unselfishly another human being the Holy Spirit renews his invisible visit to our souls giving us always new grace and charity. We by adoption are caught up in the life-giving transforming current of God's love. If seen in this light, then we can understand how the Feast of Pentecost each year can and should represent a new out-pouring of the Holy Spirit in our souls.

The Advocate has already been sent, we have already been taught, already been reminded of Jesus' teachings. How can we not give thanks for the gift? How can we not assist in the harvest? How can we not use our spiritual gifts for the service of others?

And yet we so often let the tools of the harvest sit and rust in our hearts! We wait. We wait with the excuse that we don't have time. We wait because we do not feel worthy. We wait because..... Surely, we are aware that our time is limited. When will we run out of time? When will the rust eat through our souls? When will the erosion of our heart make the ground of our faith infertile? When will sin rot our souls beyond reclamation? When will we begin to use the gifts of the Spirit, the tools of salvation, to rediscover the work of art we were meant to be? When will we through our action give the Holy Spirit enough evidence to bear witness to our being children of God?