

Pentecost Sunday (5/31/2020)

What is a body without a Soul? It lacks the very thing that gives it its life, makes it what it is, and gives it the power to act in accordance with its nature. A human body without a soul is a corpse - it does not have life, is not fully human, and it cannot be what a human being is meant to be. When the Lord implanted that immortal soul in us in our mother's womb we became human, and developed into a being capable of giving and receiving God's love in a unique way.

The early church community gathered in that upper room after the Ascension were a bit like a body in the womb. Elements necessary for the Church were present, the matter of which it would be formed, the information imparted by our Savior to them. Also present was the potential - the potential to en flesh the body of the Savior on Earth as he promised and become the living Church of Jesus Christ. One thing was required - the Body of Jesus Christ on Earth needed to have the Soul of the Divine coursing through it, it needed to have the very soul that was in Jesus in order to be His Body on Earth. It is the soul that gives life, it is the soul that makes the thing what it is, it is the soul that equips and empowers the being to live, and to develop. Just like our soul makes us human, gives us life, and gives us the potential to become what a human can become - so too the Holy Spirit that was breathed into the Church at Pentecost did three things: (1) brought that Body to life, (2) made it what it is - the Body of Jesus Christ, and (3) brought with its presence the potential to be and do all that Jesus promised it would do.

On that day, which we properly call the birthday of the Church, Jesus makes possible his promise to be with us for all time. In His Body the Church he is present in our world, through the members of that Body (which we became at our Baptism) he touches the world and ministers to his children (and calls others to become his children), in His Body the Church He offers in our time the unending sacrifice to the Father in which we will shortly be privileged to participate. Through the action of the Body He becomes present in His members, present in the Holy Eucharist, and present in the person of the Holy Spirit who fills the world with his power. In that Body, and through that Spirit, Our Lord proclaims the one true message of faith that brought together those of various nations on that day of Pentecost.

It is easy to doubt the presence of the Spirit in our world. So many people in our day look at the world and compare it to the world they would like to create, and they see that it is not

as they want it to be. They use this as a reason to cast doubt on the presence and action of an all-powerful God. We too are so used to the images of power that are displayed in movies and in our own imagination, we are so convinced that the Spirit will display as we expect, we can forget the nature of that Spirit. But Jesus says in the Gospel today: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you: not as the world gives, do I give it to you.* He goes on to say: *Let not your hearts be troubled.* This same Jesus Christ goes to the Father and sends to us the Holy Spirit. This Spirit does not move as the world would demand, it does not move as we would like, it does not conform itself to the standards of Steven Spielberg - the Spirit is mysterious in its presence and action - but of great power. We should not be troubled by this. We hear the Spirit described in Scripture as wind, and as flame. The flame dances in ways that cannot be predicted, you can pass your hand through it unharmed, but it has a great power that will transform and change whatever comes into contact long enough. The wind blows from unseen places, it cannot be held, it cannot be controlled. Sometimes it blows with power, sometimes with a quiet breath, sometimes seemingly not at all. So too the Spirit of God that is the Soul of the Church. It enlivens, it brings into being, it is great power, it is a gentle force, it allows one to pass unchanged, yet it has the power to transform all that come into contact with it.

Today we celebrate the event of the first outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. The disciples gathered together had the Spirit poured upon them. We see in the scriptures the great transformation that they underwent as this Spirit flowed with life inside them. They began to preach with courageous fortitude, they gave right counsel in their group and to whomever they spoke, they gained wisdom, knowledge, and understanding; they worshiped God with true piety, and felt deeply within them the respect for God that is called the fear of the Lord. The gifts of the disciples were a sign of the spiritual life flowing within them. In baptism and confirmation we were given gifts to be used as members of that Body enlivened by the Spirit. As the disciples in the womb of the upper room were made the Church when the soul of God entered the Body, so too we must allow the Spirit of that same God enter us and make us spiritually reborn in the darkness of this womb of the increasingly Godless world. As we join together as the Body of Jesus Christ and pray that the Spirit enliven us, let us not be troubled, for the Lord longs to give us, through that Spirit, a peace that the world cannot give.