

Pentecost -- May 30-31, 2020

This weekend --- one of the great holy days

- Birthday of the Church – Pentecost
- Disciples of Jesus empowered to carry on his mission, etc.

Equally great for us this year is the return to public worship and Holy Communion this weekend.

It is not like it was before -- but at least we have options again and with restrictions we can celebrate weddings and funerals and gather for other prayers and scripture study and the like.

Last Sunday I spoke briefly about how we are beginning to accept that this new reality of dealing with the coronavirus is going to be with us for some time.

As persons of faith we can look at how all this has come about for us and our world and be grateful for God's timing.

The timing of the feasts of the Church year as this pandemic has come about is a remarkable blessing.

It was in Lent that the coronavirus was first discovered in our country and its deadliness realized. – We then celebrated the feast of Easter which reminded us that God's power is greater than all sin and death and whatever we have to face. Last week we celebrated the Ascension in which Jesus assured us that he remains with us through all time. And finally, today on Pentecost, we celebrate God's gift of guidance and power to carry on the healing mission of Jesus poured out upon all believers in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Again, the timing of the feast of Pentecost could not be better for us. The experience of Jesus' death had overwhelmed the first disciples. But Jesus had foreseen their needs and told them to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit who would be their new helper to be with them always.

And so it happened that even as the disciples were frozen in fear and had locked themselves in the upper room, they nevertheless prayed for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit.

In today's first reading we saw what happened on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them --- their fears may have remained, but their joy and confidence in the Lord was far greater. The HS convinced them about the death and resurrection of Jesus. -- It gave them hope of forgiveness and restoration to God's grace and friendship. It gave them joy and a great desire to share all the graces that they were experiencing.

All this is what we need now today – to deal with the economic crises that so many are experiencing – to deal with the stress of all the changes in our lives – to deal with the sins and violence that are still present in ourselves and in our world as we see in the news.

We need the help of the HS.

Sure – we can go on surviving in our old way life and thinking without the HS --- but for us who want to live an actual Christian life and to put on and to live the new life we received in Baptism – we can do nothing without the HS. We are given the Holy Spirit so that we can know the things of God. It is like having excellent eyesight, but at night without light we can see nothing. It is the same with the human soul. Unless it absorbs the gift of the Holy Spirit through faith, the mind has the ability to know God but lacks the spiritual light necessary for that knowledge. We need the Holy Spirit .

When visiting with my spiritual director last week he told me that when he teaches the RCIA classes in his parish and goes through all the instructions and formation with them, he always ends by telling them that if they forget everything he has taught them but they remember three words that is all that is most important. The three words they need to remember, he tells them, are: COME HOLY SPIRIT. We can know all the facts about our faith, but without the gift of the

Holy Spirit we will not move or act on what we know. Unfortunately, we see this all of the time.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is offered in its fullness to everyone. It is available to all but it is given to each one in proportion to their readiness to receive it. Its presence is fuller the greater one's desire to be worthy of it. --- For example – Mary – The angel greeted her with the words – “Hail full of grace or full of the Holy Spirit.” Mary was full of grace and the HS because of her great humility. She knew that she needed God. Compare this to Adam and Eve who basically said – “We don't need God -- we can ourselves can be like God if we eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and when they did, their relationship with God their creator became broken and disordered

So how do we get in touch with the Holy Spirit that is already within us? Though we cannot directly see the HS -- the power and effects of the Spirit are very visible if we have the eyes of faith..

A good symbol of the Holy Spirit is water. Like water that comes down as rain and produces different fruits and effects depending on where it lands. The one Holy Spirit coming down upon different persons produces different effects in each one for the common good, as St. Paul says in today's second reading.

The Holy Spirit is God's own life poured into us to transform us and make us all one in Christ. The same powerful Spirit that came into the disciples of Jesus at that first Pentecost is the Spirit that is in us and can come to life in us today, but, is there a desire to be worthy of this gift and to release its power in our life?

The issue of whether or not the Holy Spirit is able to act in us and through us is the same as that when we go to communion. Unless we turn away from sin and make a place for God in our hearts God cannot enter in. That is why the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation are so important. Our reception of the Holy Spirit is limited by the openness of our hearts to God.

Therefore – the need for repentance and reconciliation with God. When Peter gave his powerful Pentecost Day sermon, many were cut to the heart by his words and asked – "what must we do?" Peter's response to them was that they should repent and then be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

I encourage all of you to continue praying and making novenas for the gift and renewal of the Holy Spirit in your life, but I also encourage you to make greater use of the sacrament of Confession and Reconciliation. We must continue to recognize and turn away from sin in order to make room for the new life and new way of life that came to us in Baptism. We see this same concern in today's Gospel -- Jesus gave his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit, but at the same time he also authorized them to forgive sins in his name in order for them to help others make room in themselves for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This new life was always needed and necessary but it is now needed and necessary more than ever in our world. As the Lord, at the creation of the world, breathed life into Adam, may He now send His Holy Spirit into the Church today to be its life and strength that it may bring new life to the whole world. Today, on Pentecost, and every day, we must constantly pray, "Come Holy Spirit."