

The sudden wind. The tongues of fire. The group of men speaking in different languages. This is the beginning of the Church, as the Acts of the Apostles remember it. Every element of the scene speaks to the long tradition of God's revelation. Every detail of the Pentecost has a beginning somewhere deep in the history of mankind. The closed room; the living fire resting on their heads and, most powerful of all, those different languages. You probably remember, it was God himself who had confused the languages of people. When they became too proud, too powerful, too self-centered, they lost the ability to communicate with each other. The Tower of Babel had never been finished because it couldn't be finished. The biblical image hits you with an astonishing precision. Imagine a crowd that, all of a sudden, starts speaking languages that others cannot understand. Have you ever been to a Turkish homily, a Polish theater, or a Chinese market square? No wonder they all become confused and, all of a sudden become very, very far from each other. Maybe even each other's enemies. There is no reason and there is no way to be together. There was no reason and there was no way to keep building the tower.

Nothing seems to have changed since then. Only the divisions go deeper. Only the languages get more and more distant. No, it's not just about geography. It's also not just about linguistics. You can easily see the echo of that ancient division in the way that different generations, believers in different ideas, and carriers of different feelings talk to each other. If I take it further, I might realize that every time I submerge myself in my narcissism, I develop my own language, and I am very disappointed, no, very angry, when no-one understands my yelling. Usually this is when I get frustrated and start simply demanding that the world understands me. I forget that nobody speaks that language but me.

If you multiply that image by eight billion, add thousands of electronic channels and media, and permute it by infinite divisions in politics, culture, and convictions, you find yourself in the modern world. In the middle of this world, God offers you the locked room, strong wind, and a group of men waiting. Their longing is answered. The tongues of fire appear over their heads, and they start talking to people outside. Everyone hears his very own language. Visitors from places whose names make lectors cry every year in the church. Have you ever been to Phrygia or Pamphylia? Please don't answer. You might have, you just don't know it.

The miracle of languages is the very heart of the mystery of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit reveals himself by the action that penetrates the deepest of the human divisions: the miscommunication caused by stubbornness and selfishness. They hear their own languages. They hear their native tongues. They hear somebody speaking directly to them. As one of the popes put it: "God does not speak to the masses, he speaks to persons." This personal and liberating voice of the Spirit is speaking through the Church. He whispers his Good News through cultures and continents. At every moment of our life, we are given his gentle invitation to listen and to repeat his voice. In his kindness, he begs us to allow him to speak to us. And here is the terrifying part. That kind of voice will penetrate very deeply into our soul. It will be so personal that if we decide to listen, it will reveal to us all the secrets that we try to avoid. And here comes the second surprise. In the Gospel of Saint John, when Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on the apostles, we realize that this is the spirit of Mercy. "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them,

and whose sins you retain are retained.” That powerful, quiet voice speaking in our hearts is the voice that has the power to free us from sin. He becomes the mission of the Church.

Do not be afraid to look deeply in your heart. Do not be afraid to recognize the evil. Do not be afraid to open your ears to the voice that speaks directly to you. He is on your side. This wind of the Holy Spirit will liberate you and reveal to you, your true dignity. He will also teach you about the dignity of your brothers and sisters. He will give you the new language that will allow you to speak to others and to God.