

Pentecost Sunday – May 20, 2018 Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-11

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. 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.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."

Responsorial Psalm: PS 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

R. (cf. 30) Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!
How manifold are your works, O LORD!
the earth is full of your creatures;

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

If you take away their breath, they perish and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD be glad in his works! Pleasing to him be my theme; I will be glad in the LORD.

R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

Brothers and sisters: No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. 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.

Gospel: JN 15:26-27; 16:12-15

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presens of God..

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a Word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

This is the last Sunday of Easter season. It's Mass is vivid. Suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. 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 (First Reading). Wouldn't we have loved to be there? How thrilling! But let us look at the wording. The noise was not an actual wind but something "like" a wind. And these were not tongues of fire, but tongues "as of fire" (i.e., "as if they were made of fire"). They were discussing marvels that could not be described as is, so they used metaphors. What if we tried a literal description: There was this sound that came from the sky, something that sounded like, uh, oh, let's see, uh, wind! That's it. It wasn't wind but that is the closest I can get. And then stuff that looked sort of like chunks of fire, or maybe tongues made out of fire. Only it wasn't really fire or tongues either. Oh, I can't describe it. They were experiencing a presence that cannot truly be written down. Obviously it was something very real but too deep for words. So they resorted to metaphor.

Are we allowed to prophesy and talk in tongues as the apostles did?* St. Paul handles this question beautifully in the Second Reading. The answer is found by recalling who the Holy Spirit is (the reader and I have been doing this in previous weeks). The Holy Spirit is completely and truly God, the third person of the Holy Trinity come to dwell within us. No wonder it is hard to talk about! In our time the bestowal of the Spirit is less dramatic. There has been a regularization and it has been gradual. Look, for instance, at Acts 19:1-8, in which St. Paul came upon a dozen or so disciples who had never even heard of the Holy Spirit! He baptized them, and as he "laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied." Was this the beginning of the sacrament of Baptism? When we receive baptism and other sacraments, we are receiving the Holy Spirit, quietly and in ritual form. Christ and his Father come to dwell within us. Let us ask again, as we have in previous weeks, why do you and I not act as someone who has God within us? Well, like anything planted so deep, the Spirit's presence must have time to make its way into our actions, our words, our deeds. Whenever we find patches of charity or joy in ourselves, or patience and kindness, or the ability to endure hardship and injuries, when we are drawn toward mildness and modesty, then we can surely know that the Holy Spirit is at work. No, it is not heavy winds and tongues of fire, as in former days. But it is the same Spirit of Jesus and of the Father that has been bestowed throughout history. Can we open to it?

*For people in charismatic movements there is the "slaying in the Spirit," and also what St. Paul called "glossolalia," or speaking in tongue. This is a dramatic experience, but not present to the majority of Church members..

John Foley, SJ

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INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Did the Holy Spirit come only once in history, as in the upper room? Or do you see the Holy Spirit as dynamic and constant in every life? Explain. How were the disciples different after the Spirit's arrival? Are you confident that the Spirit is with you? Discuss.
2. St. Alphonsus Rodriguez was a Jesuit Brother (1533-1617) whose job was doorkeeper of the Jesuit College in Majorca. For forty years. Would this spiritual gift of service compare to that of St. Francis Xavier, who converted whole countries? How?
3. Jesus "breathed" on them. How does this relate to Genesis 2:7, "God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life?" What is the significance for you? How important is the Holy Spirit to you?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who bestow heavenly gifts upon your Church, safeguard, we pray, the grace you have given, that the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon her may retain all its force and that this spiritual food may gain her abundance of eternal redemption. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.