

Homily for Pentecost Sunday 2021:

Typically, in a murder mystery, the detective who arrives at the scene of the crime looks for any signs of life in the victim. It would not be unusual for him in the least to ask questions such as, "Is the victim breathing?", "Does she have a pulse?" "Is she able to speak?", and "Is she moving? If the answers are all negative then the likelihood is that a death has occurred. The body is lifeless.

To be alive is to breathe the breath of life.

Pentecost, a term meaning "fifty", is the feast of the Holy Spirit. Fifty days after Easter Sunday the promise of Christ to send his spirit is fulfilled. But who is the Holy Spirit? Simply put, he is God, the third person of the Most Blessed Trinity. God is life. So it is to no one's surprise that the Holy Spirit is, according to the Nicene Creed, "the Lord, the giver of life". Life is, and remains, a profound mystery. As the breath of God the Holy Spirit is the inexhaustible source of life in each of us.

In the days of my youth many years ago Catholics used to refer to the third Person of the Blessed Trinity as the Holy Ghost. It seemed a little odd to me since the only other ghost with whom I was familiar at the time was a friendly ghost named Casper!

According to the Oxford English dictionary, ghost meant a blast of air or breath. By his breath God transforms lifeless dust into a human being, a living soul. In today's gospel, we learn that in the upper room on the evening of his resurrection from the dead, Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit is the breath of Jesus.

The Spirit of God is at work wherever there is life.

More than once in recent centuries has the Church been declared dead, and never to rise again. Such statements are premature, if not foolish. The Church is supernatural. The Holy Spirit is the Church's soul, the church's life.

IN 1970, George Harrison, a former member of The Beatles, a hugely successful English rock and roll band, penned a song for his best-selling album, "All Things Must Pass", with the title "What is Life?" In reading the words of the popular song, one gathers that Harrison was convinced that without the love of the woman he deeply cared for, there could be no meaningful life for him. Life and love are inseparable

Since the Holy Spirit is the source of wisdom and knowledge, Christians believe that through his inspiration, that most fundamental of questions can be answered. To participate in God's inner life is to understand and appreciate the mystery of Love. It is the mystery of grace. In the first epistle of John, the Evangelist writes, "God is Love". God is life!

In the late 1950's, the then reigning pontiff, Pope John XXIII, wanted to call a council in which the world's bishop's would gather in Rome to participate in the proceedings. According to the pope, the idea came from the Holy Spirit. When the council first opened in 1962, he penned a prayer.

"O Holy Spirit, renew your wonders in our time, as though for a new Pentecost".

During the council, school children from all over the world recited that prayer.

The influence of the Roman Catholic Church continues to wane in our secular culture. Fewer Catholics practice their faith. Churchgoing has fallen off dramatically. The sacramental life of the faithful is largely ignored. Clearly we need a "new Pentecost", a radical outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit, come and be with us. Guide and enlighten us. Renew the face of the earth.