

Homily Pentecost Sunday 31/5/2020 Fr Dispin John

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I'm sure I may have shared this, that I come from a small coastal town in the Southern tip of India, a place called Muttom. During this time of lockdown, I've managed to catch up with a



lot of my friends from my younger days. Back then we were a unique group of friends who gathered practically every morning and evening on the church grounds to chat, to laugh, to tease and to share some great moments. Most of our parents did not like us getting together as they feared that we would never get anywhere in our lives. But these days we spend time on

WhatsApp, the chatting platform, reminiscing, the past, recollecting all the fun things, the silly things and the sometimes naughty things. Thanks to this lockdown.



It's almost like a reunion of friends from about 30 years. In this past 30 years, we hardly connected. Despite our great friendship, we hardly connected, because we were so busy with studies, getting jobs, getting married and children - not in my case - and then they go on to occupy the rest of our lives. Rightfully so. And so these past 30 years is like a lost time for us. As we realized that we had trapped ourselves in our own security, we busied ourselves with our routines and then forgot about the good things of life. Our life circles had become so small, they became our security. We felt that breaking that secure wall of our small circles would be dangerous and so, conveniently and comfortably, stayed within those imaginary walls of our lives. And so this lockdown, which is supposed to be a trap, ironically has freed us and made us look at the real joys of life. The friends of Jesus were hiding behind the locked doors, as we hear in the gospel today, trapped within these walls and their own fears.

And these walls became a sign of security they believed would keep themselves safe. In the company of their frightened disciples, they felt secure. In the company of frightened companions, they felt secure. In this process they almost forgot their great leader, their master, their Messiah who walked with them, lived with them and told them of the promise of the kingdom. Fear can be very powerful, it can trap us forever, and this fear made the disciples forget, almost, the values of courage and compassion, the power of prayer and being connected constantly with God through Jesus. In their small sense of false security, the disciples lost sense of the real power that comes with being connected with Jesus. So as we celebrate this great feast of Pentecost, which was an original Jewish festival, after they left Egypt, 50 days after, they celebrated this covenant with their God, that becomes now after 50 days of the resurrection, we celebrate the new covenant with God in Jesus. The book of Genesis begins with, "in the beginning when God created the universe, the earth was formless and desolate". Then God gives life to the whole creation and then breathes his life into human beings.

The gospel of John begins with exactly the same words "in the beginning". Scripture scholars believe that this was not just a coincidence. John places this to make us understand that the creative work begun by God in the beginning is now being fulfilled and completed in Jesus. Through his redemptive sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection, Jesus makes us a new creation. Jesus recreates us and thus the story of God's creation comes to its fulfillment.

The feast of Pentecost is a moment of joyful recreation of the church. The spirit of God is poured out into each one of us individually and collectively on our community. It's a reminder that Christ never left us, but rather is present in us and to us every moment of our lives. But then our lives are at times busy with stuff. We set ourselves in a routine and become trapped in our small world of comfort and convenience. So much so that we think that nothing exists beyond those convenient and comfortable walls we have set ourselves in. It could be our work, our families at times, our hobbies and our own vices and fears. We can easily and voluntarily trap ourselves in these and feel a sense of false security. Through the outpouring of the spirit, God renews us today. God's creative work continues to strengthen us.

This feast where Jesus breaks through the locked doors of frightened disciples, is a message of hope to each one of us that we do not need to stay trapped in our world of fear and anxiety. We do not have to live in a world of doubt and confusion. We do not have to keep running or running away. We do not have to submit to the power of evil. The liberating spirit of Jesus will save us if we choose to believe. This is a free gift from Jesus. Only in the gift of the spirit is fear changed into freedom. Only in the spirit are the disciples empowered to understand the past anew and see the future with hope. The Holy Spirit is the exit from the hopelessness of being locked into a cruel and fearful past. That spirit is the exit that leads us into the streets and the marketplaces where hordes of people may see sit, walk freely, but where so many may feel trapped in their own lives.

So hopefully, this time of lockdown has taught us the value of life, of friendship. The need to slow down and the importance of spending time with our beloved ones. Maybe this time of not so busy-ness has taught us the value of silence and prayer. More importantly, we realize that we need Jesus to break down the false walls of security we have built around us. So friends, please continue to remind yourselves that Jesus has breathed his spirit into each one of us just like God breathed his spirit into creation. So take courage and break free. May the spirit of God once again, be poured out into each one of us and our families and may you feel the part of God penetrate your fears and make you strong again. May this spirit renew us and recreate us.

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