

Commentary to The Solemnity of Pentecost



The Solemnity of Pentecost: Invoking the Spirit

It was a huge change. There was nothing subtle about it. They had been in hiding, scared out of their wits. Jesus had been arrested. Rumors flew that the high priests wanted Him crucified. The “Powers-that-be” wanted to send a message to all who would dare challenge their authority. The message was received, loud and clear. None of the disciples were around to witness the events of that Friday, the one we call Good. None, that is, except John, as well as his mother, Mary, Mary Magdeline and a few other of Jesus’ closest friends. But now, fifty days later, the eleven remaining disciples were publically proclaiming Jesus Christ, right there in the Temple area, right where those who murdered Jesus could see them. “You cannot kill God’s plan,” they said. “You couldn’t even keep Jesus in the grave, for He rose and gave His Life to all who believe in Him.” The apostles who had been so afraid of suffering and dying, now saw their own deaths as minor in comparison to their new life with Christ. And they all would be put to death, all except, according to tradition, the only one of them who had the courage to be at the foot of the cross, the apostle John.

It was a huge change. And people were listening. And joining. 3,000 people chose Jesus Christ that first day the apostles proclaimed Him, that Pentecost Sunday. What happened? How was it that those

who feared for their lives now scoffed at death? How was it that 3,000 people would jeopardize their own lives to join these followers of Jesus? How could those simple men, fishermen mostly, move the hearts of so many to Jesus Christ? How was it possible that these Eleven could suddenly be so powerful spiritually? What happened?

The Holy Spirit happened. The Holy Spirit came upon the Eleven and Mary that Pentecost Sunday, and then, through them came upon all who would choose Jesus Christ. There was a tremendous power evidenced. People heard God speaking to them in their own languages, even though the apostles spoke, most probably, in Aramaic. The Holy Spirit was the Power. The Holy Spirit was God Himself transforming people into the Body of Christ. The apostles began the mission of evangelization, of bringing the world to the Gospel by invoking the Holy Spirit, the Power of God.

We also can invoke the Holy Spirit, the Power of God. We can do this by virtue of our sacrament of confirmation, our personal sharing in Pentecost. We can call upon God to be present. And He will be present.

People long for the mysterious. People seek the mystical. The media feeds into this desire through shows that present the mysterious domain of the dead. The vampire craze has as much to do with people's fascination with the unworldly as it does with being a medium for teenage romance tails. People run to astrologers and mediums, shamans and gurus, hoping to be exposed to the mystical. And, to paraphrase St. Augustine, they run hard, but in the wrong directions.

To find the mystical, people have merely to go to the disciples of the Lord. To find the mystical, people have only to go to you, and to me. Jesus Christ has given us His Spirit, His Power. We can call upon the Lord, and through the Power of the Holy Spirit, He will be present.

What an awesome gift! Literally, awesome. We can make God present. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," He said, "I am there with them." Wherever we are at prayer, Jesus is there. He gives us the power to call upon Him. This Power is the Holy Spirit.

We need to remember this when we make our plans for our lives, or, perhaps, watch them deteriorate. Colleges and careers, financial success or disaster, growing relationships or dying relationships, all those areas of life that take up so much of our time, so much of our energy, all those things that excite us, or depress us, everything, everything is secondary to the Great Gift we received on Pentecost, the

Gift of invoking the Power of God, the Gift of the Holy Spirit. For rich or poor, in a crowd or just two or three gathered in His Name, we can call upon the Spirit to send the Son to us, and Jesus will be there, leading us to the Father.

We need to care for this power, and use it well. We need to nourish our ability to call upon this Power. We need to stay close to Jesus Christ. For others are depending upon us. Others need us to proclaim the Good News to them with our words and our lives. And the Good News is this: Jesus Christ has transformed the world. Life is beautiful, or as Bishop Fulton J. Sheen would say, “Life is worth living.” Life is worth living when it is lived with God.

How many days do you have left? How many days do I have left? None of us know. But every day that remains must be days that we proclaim to the world that Jesus lives and is among us. And thus we conclude today the Easter Season.

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