

Commentary to the Solemnity of Pentecost B



The doors were locked. The bar was firmly in place. The Temple police who had hunted Jesus down Thursday evening would not so easily get into the Upper Room on Sunday. The disciples really didn't know what they should do now that Jesus was dead. What they did know was that for the time being they were in a safe place. They were there on Easter Sunday. Perhaps they were there all fifty days after that fateful Passover. The Acts of the Apostles has them there for those fifty days, thus the name Pentecost. The Gospel of John doesn't mention how long they were there. But it also points out that the disciples were in a safe place.

Safe, until the Lord called them out of their safety. In John's Gospel He breathed on them. He gave them life just as His Father had breathed on Adam and gave him life. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you, said. And in those words they were called out of comfort, out of safety and into the dangerous life of proclaiming Jesus Christ.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the apostles received the Holy Spirit in the symbols of fire and wind, and immediately left the safety of the Upper Room to proclaim the Good News. The apostles were doing exactly what Jesus did before He was put to death. They were risking their lives, losing their lives, for the Kingdom of God. They gave up their safe place, for the safety of the Kingdom.

It is easy to stay in a safe place. It is easy to cling to our comfort level. But Christ continually calls us out of the Upper Rooms of our lives. He continually calls us to embrace the challenges of the Gospel.

We have our group, our safe place. Perhaps our safe place is populated by the popular crowd in school, at work, in the neighborhood. Perhaps the goal of so many of their lives is nothing more than to live for themselves. They embrace and glorify the pagan values of a material world. And we are comfortable

being with them. Why should we be the one who is different? Why should we be the one who is going to challenge values? And then Jesus calls us out of the Upper Room. He calls us to be different, to be holy. He calls us to be the one who embraces virtue. He calls us into the insecurity of proclamation.

Or perhaps our safe place is a relationship with a person that we have grown accustomed to. We can't say that we really love him or her, but if we are honest with ourselves we have to admit that we would rather have a relationship going nowhere than no relationship at all. As a result, we are not growing. We are merely existing. And then Christ calls us out of this Upper Room to seek His Presence in others, and to bring His Presence to others. It is scary. It is frightening venturing out alone in the world. But we cannot be true to ourselves and hide in a flawed relationship. So we take a leap of faith into the arms of the Lord. His call, His message, His Gospel is infinitely more important than our comfort.

Blessed Mother Theresa of Calcutta said, "If you want to give God a good laugh, tell Him your plans." That is because He has plans for each of us beyond our imaginations, plans, ways, that we can bring His love to others.

So a young couple learns that the baby coming will be a special needs child. They give the child the life he or she has a right to. And they realize that the child is a gift. This child has made them more loving than they could imagine.

So an older couple meticulously plan their retirement. There will be travel, and golf, and a home near the beach. But sickness changes everything before it has even begun. Money for travel goes to the doctors. The care giver spouse does not regret one second of the direction he or she has been called to. Golf and travel are not important. Love is important. And in the fortieth, fiftieth, or even sixtieth year of marriage, they give witness to the overwhelming Presence of the Lord in their marriage.

He calls us out of our Upper Rooms. But He does far more, infinitely more than that. He doesn't just call us to proclaim the Good News. He gives us the ability to proclaim the Gospel. He gives us His Spirit. The Spirit that forms us into Church, the Spirit that is itself the Third Person of the Trinity is poured into us. That Spirit allows us to speak with our lives the language of the Love of God. That Spirit allows others to hear God in every one of us.

The strength that the young couple has to care for their special child is an empowerment of the Spirit. The strength that the elderly husband or wife has to care for their sick spouse is an empowerment of

the Spirit. The strength that we have to step away from relationships that are stifling our growth is an empowerment of the Spirit.

The strength of the Holy Spirit is given to us so that our lives might be proclamations of the Gospel.

Today we celebrate the Spirit that empowers us to leave our comfort zone, to leave our places of safety, to leave our security, and to leap into the challenge of the Gospel. Today we pray that we might have the courage of our convictions. Today we pray that we will be people of Pentecost.

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