

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, May 19th 2024

The Gospel begins by saying “On the evening of the First day of the week.” By the time the Gospel of John was written, the first day of the week had become the accepted day for Christians to gather for the celebration of the Eucharist. John sets the scene of Jesus breathing on the disciples and inviting them to “receive the Holy Spirit” in the backdrop of the weekly gatherings of the first Christian community.

John gives the details of the incident: It was the first day of the week, it was evening and the doors were closed. The closed doors may simply have explained the fear of the disciples, as John himself presented. But they may also have symbolised the hearts of the disciples, that are closed and paralysed, not yet ready to believe that their Lord who was tortured and killed, is now alive.

It is into the midst of these unbelieving group, the Lord comes in. He is no more restrained by the closed doors – he passes through their hardened hearts to breath peace and joy. Remember the words in the letter to the Hebrews 4:12: “For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Was this the experience of the disciples when they felt the Lord was breathing on them and invited them to “receive the Holy Spirit?”

The Word of God is not chained! It pierces through any closed doors – enters deep into the hearts of people. And whispers gently to the hearts that are burdened, bruised, restless, frightened, lonely and sad, the message of “Peace be with you.” He breaths happiness and peace into their hearts and invite them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promises the guidance of the Spirit in our lives. Gospel of John has given us extensive details on the works of the Holy Spirit. “I will not leave you alone,” “The Spirit of Truth will guide you to all truth.” Today, as the Church joyously celebrates its birthday, we are reminded to pray to the Holy Spirit, for the guidance, direction, protection during our journey of faith.

We often pray to God the Father, we pray to Jesus, but we seldom pray to the Holy Spirit and thus fail to listen to the voice of the Spirit. If we listen to him in silence, He makes the Word of God penetrate in our hearts and gives us the strength to live by the Gospel. Today we are called to let ourselves be led by the voice of the Spirit to give glory to Jesus.