

Sunday Readings Study for Small Communities

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

Cycle C - June 5, 2022

OPENING PRAYER



Leader: Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord, my God, you are great indeed!

All: When you send forth your spirit, we are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

Leader: *Let us invoke the presence of God:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit have instructed the hearts of the faithful grant that by the same Spirit we may truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

FIRST READING [Acts 2 (1-11)]

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God."

The Jews gathered in Jerusalem for a spring festival, called Pentecost, in which they presented the first fruits of the season to God. There were, therefore, people from many regions, who spoke different languages and dialects, as narrated in this reading.

Following the instructions of Jesus Christ, the apostles had stayed in Jerusalem, because he had promised them that he would send them the Holy Spirit. This promise is fulfilled during the Jewish celebration of Pentecost. (Pentecost is a Greek word meaning fifty. And the festival in question was celebrated immediately after the completion of "a week of weeks," that is, seven weeks, or 49 days. That is why Pentecost was celebrated on the 50th day of Easter, just as we Christians do now).

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, the gospel message that began to be preached by the Church from that day, could be understood by all who were in Jerusalem, as if it were preached to them in their native tongue. But the text does not attribute this feat to the apostles. The strength and effectiveness of testimony is due to the Holy Spirit acting in them.

(1) In the episode of the Tower of Babel [Genesis 2 (1-9)], God sows confusion among men using languages. The opposite happens in this episode. Discuss this.

(2) Have you ever felt the power of the Holy Spirit in a particular way?

(3) Since when does the Holy Spirit exist?

(4) Did some people receive the Holy Ghost before the coming of Jesus Christ? Who, for example?

(5) Read Luke 3 (15-16). Do you remember reading in the gospels that the apostles were baptized? By what kind of baptism did they then receive the Holy Spirit?

SECOND READING [1 Corinthians 12 (3-7), (12-13)]

Brothers and sisters:

No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.

To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

The essential characteristic of the Christian community is the vital relationship with Christ. Without Christ, there is no possible life, as we reflected a few Sundays ago with the image of the vine and the branches. Each of the believers is part of the same Christ, just as the various members are part of one body.

For his part, the Spirit also has a function: he is the one who distributes the gifts among the believers. The Spirit of God, present in each of the baptized, manifests itself differently, according to the Christian. There are different ministries (services) and there are different activities, and each of these is carried out by different members. However, the Church is the same, and the Spirit that animates it is only One. We have all been baptized in the same Spirit to form a single body, which is the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

We see that the Spirit is intimately linked to Christ, and the authentic experience of the Spirit is distinguished because it precisely leads to the encounter with Christ and the recognition of him as Lord. And for this he uses people and manages their gifts, not for their own benefit or to be proud, but to help the rest of the community to be closer to the Lord.

- (1) Look at the members of your group. What gifts can you recognize in them? And in you?
- (2) "In each one the Spirit is manifested for the common good." How do you relate the answers to the previous question to this sentence from the second reading?
- (3) Why do some people seem to have greater spiritual gifts than others?
- (4) What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit? What do they mean?

GOSPEL [John 20 (19-23)]

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

The gift of the Spirit to the disciples is closely linked to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel of John places it on the same day of the resurrection, as it is read in this text, although Luke places it on the feast of Pentecost. The detail of the date becomes secondary to the importance of what happens with the apostles: The Spirit of God that was communicated to them after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, began to act in the Church, and has been doing so for twenty centuries .

The words of Jesus that accompany the gift of the Spirit specify the mission that the apostles receive, which is the continuation of their work: they are sent to proclaim the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness did not exist before Jesus Christ, and it is part of the Good News that must be announced. Since then, through the action of the Church, the reestablishment of the relationship between God and men, which had been broken by sin, has been propitiated.

- (1) In creation, God breathes into man to give him life. Now Jesus breathes on his apostles to give them the Holy Spirit. How important is the Holy Spirit to you?
- (2) We read that the first mission of the apostles was to forgive sins. What does the forgiveness of sins have to do with the Holy Spirit?
- (3) Are you one of those who invoke the Holy Spirit as if it were a separate spirit, separate from God? Wouldn't it be more appropriate to call him 'God the Holy Spirit' to avoid this confusion?

CLOSING PRAYER

Come, God the Holy Spirit, and send us your light from heaven, to enlighten us.
Without your divine inspiration we men can do nothing and sin dominates us.

Come now, father of the poor, light that penetrates souls, giver of all gifts.
Wash our filth, fertilize our desert and heal our wounds.

Source of all consolation, kind guest of the soul, peace in the hours of mourning.
Bend our arrogance, warm our coldness, straighten our paths.

You are pause at work; breeze in a fire climate; comfort in the midst of tears
Grant those who put their faith and trust in you your seven sacred gifts.

Come, sanctifying light, and enter to the bottom of the soul of all those who adore you.
Give us virtues and merits, give us a good death and with you eternal joy.



SOURCE OF ALL CONSOLATION

It is often said that the great unknown in the Church is the Holy Spirit. Many turn to him, he is invoked in moments of the most serious decisions and light and wisdom are often asked of him. We know that he is the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, but on many occasions he is confused – unfortunately out of ignorance – with a kind of demi-god or intermediate spirit between God and humanity. But, the truth is that he is God. We confess it in the Creed and receive it in Baptism; also in confirming him we are given a very particular strength, when he grants us the seven sacred gifts from him. Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, the ministers receive a particular strength from that Holy Spirit with which they configure themselves to Christ and act in his name.

The day of Pentecost came – in the form of tongues of fire – to the disciples of Jesus to give them the strength and enthusiasm necessary to begin the immense work of evangelization. Throughout the centuries, it has never been lacking in the Church. Furthermore, he is the protagonist of the evangelizing mission, guiding and supporting all the disciples and missionaries of Jesus who proclaim his Gospel and build the kingdom. Those who receive Baptism and Confirmation are reminded that they have been anointed by Him: that is,

they have been marked and destined for the mission and to reach the fullness of holiness throughout their journey through the world.

We usually know him as the PARACLITE, this is like the COMFORTER. In the sequence that is sung before the Gospel on the day of Pentecost we recognize it as "SOURCE OF ALL CONSOLATION". What does this mean? The Spirit, as we well know from the Catechism, comes to our aid to give us sufficient strength to remain faithful to the commitment made in baptism and confirmation. Therefore, we can say that he sustains us, encourages us, guides us... That is, he gives us the necessary encouragement to be able to overcome difficulties, and also to live in the freedom of the children of God. This is what "source of all comfort" means. In biblical and Christian parlance, consolation means strength with which commitment can be sustained. The prophet announces God's order, for example: "Comfort my people." That is, support my people in need of help and encouragement.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter par excellence: with Him one receives the necessary strength to walk towards the fullness of the encounter with God the Father; with its help you can overcome temptation and overcome sin. In addition, with his consolation, enthusiasm and joy are received to be able to carry out the evangelizing task or remain faithful to God. With that marvelous gift or present of his consolation, we can experience what the Liturgy sings on the day of Pentecost: "Bend our pride, warm our coldness, straighten our paths..." With faith, then, we can also ask the Comforter who sustains, gives strength and encouragement: "Give us virtues and merits, give us a good death and with you eternal joy. Amen".

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