

## Pentecost --- May 22-23, 2021

Many of you enjoy the monthly Word Among Us booklets that you use to help you understand and reflect on the daily scripture readings. This Sunday has a wonderful reflection on a phrase they take from the today's first reading and its account of the first Pentecost experience – **“they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”**

The reflection starts with the question: “How big was this ALL? -- Those experiencing the outpouring of the Spirit were not just the twelve apostles. St. Luke tells us that the group was about 120 in number. So it included various disciples and followers of the Lord including the women who accompanied Jesus and the apostles to support them.

But, whatever the number – they ALL received the Holy Spirit and were gifted to speak in tongues and became courageous in speaking about Jesus and the works of God to all. If you follow the train of thought here you can see where this is going. The message is that God wants everyone, including us, to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit if we ask. God wants to fill everyone of us with his Holy Spirit.

The time is here for us to ask for the Holy Spirit. Throughout the seasons of Lent and Easter we have been strengthened through penance and prayer and then celebration of Jesus' triumph over sin and death these last 50 days. Now we are being sent out as Jesus was sent out to live in the world in a different way than we did before. Filled with the Holy Spirit, we are called to use the different gifts and talents we have been given to live out Christ's forgiveness and peace in the world. We are to go forth and give witness to the new life that we have received and experienced.

This is not easy. To be sent as Jesus was sent means stripping off all the human armor that often use to protect ourselves. In Paul's letter to the Galatians he exhorts us to renounce hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions and the like. All of these are counter to the way of Jesus who opened himself to serve us even to the sacrifice of his life for us. Today on the feast of

Pentecost we need to ask the Holy Spirit to renew us in faithfulness to follow in the footsteps of Christ who came to serve and not to be served.

We need to remember that Jesus never tells the disciples to go out on their own to spread the good news and form the Church. Instead, he calls upon the Father in prayer to help them and tells them to wait for the Holy Spirit that the Father will send them to continue to help them. It is the Holy Spirit that will testify to him and help them to give their testimony. It is the Holy Spirit who will lead them to a deeper understanding of all that he has spoken to them. He tells them that he has much more to tell them but they cannot bear it now. But, when the Holy Spirit comes he will guide them to all truth.

The disciples did as Jesus said and came together in the upper room to pray day by day for the help that Jesus promised to send them. And what we see in today's readings is a picture of the great power and activity of the Spirit that came about both inwardly and outwardly in their life after their reception of the Holy Spirit and his gifts..

Outwardly, St. Luke gives us a list, **not** of people who literally heard the preaching of Peter on Pentecost day, but of all those who had heard the Gospel by the time that Luke writes these words in the last part of the first century. The list of places, if put on a map, form a large circle around Jerusalem. In the beginning of the gospel of Luke, the devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world that he could give to Jesus if Jesus would bow down to him. Now in the Acts of the Apostles St. Luke shows us the kingdoms that have come to belong to Christ through the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

Today in the world we see all kinds of human efforts to bring unity in the world. However, Pope Benedict the 16<sup>th</sup> assures us in one of his writings that unity is from God -- It is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's power is the source of our power. The Spirit's work is primary and ours is secondary.

He writes these words: "The human community that we build by ourselves can never, purely by its own strength, be

a fully fraternal community, nor can it overcome every division and become a truly universal community. The unity of the human race, a fraternal communion transcending every barrier, is called into being by the word of God who is love.” ---- So much for our efforts to build a new world without the help of God.

Inwardly, the Holy Spirit comes from Jesus to guide the disciples to all truth about who Jesus truly is and what his mission is.

The Spirit is given and comes to us to help us believe, to pray, to be holy, to forgive sins, to be united with each other and so much more. There is no end to what the Spirit can do in us and through us. Therefore, let us ask for the Holy Spirit to come and help us daily. In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 11, Jesus says, “If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” We must not hesitate to ask for the Holy Spirit. God will not deny our request.

Let us the pray and wait for the coming of God’s Spirit. In the Scriptures we hear about God’s coming to people in all different ways. For Elijah, it was a still small voice in the cave on Mt. Sinai. But on Pentecost – God made a big scene -- all the people gathered for the feast and then the Holy Spirit comes with winds shaking the building and loud noises, fir and people speaking in various languages. However, if we compare these two comings of God and others we will find that they have one purpose--- “God comes to tell us to “go”. That seems to be the central message of Pentecost. As it was time for the disciples to go out and take up the mission of Jesus, so it is time for us to do the same. The gifts the apostles received and we have received are sharable, even contagious, and they are available to everyone.

One person says it this way: God whispers: “Go give her a hand.” God nags, “Go and say you are sorry.” God shouts, “Go and do something about that!”. God shakes up our normal life in an effort to get us to go and love -- go and give – go and do that hard thing -- go and listen – go and

play – go and pray – go to a deeper level of trust in me --  
go because I am with you. Always.