



May 28, 2023

Easter—Pentecost

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim."

Acts 2:4



Dear Friends,

Some years ago, my friend Guillermo and his mother, Chita, came with me to visit my Dad in Southern California. One evening near dinner time there was a good number of family members gathered: some chatting and others preparing dinner. At one point I saw my Dad and Chita chattering away. My Dad spoke no Spanish, and Chita speaks no English. I turned to Guillermo and said, "What are those two talking about?" We both laughed. Despite the linguistic differences they were both able to understand each other. I still laugh whenever I think about it.

Once Pope Benedict XVI said, *"The modern world is a latter-day Babel, where arrogance inspired by technological progress leads people to play God and sets them against each other, a predicament from which people can escape only by divinely inspired humility and love."* The pope was referring to a story of the building of a tower in Babel, from the Book of Genesis in the Hebrew (Old) Testament.

In the story, humankind came to think of themselves *"strong enough to be able to construct on their own a path to heaven [a large skyscraper-like tower] in order to open [Heaven's] doors and put themselves in God's place."* That ambition bred conflict not only with God but among people themselves. This caused them to lose *"the ability to agree, to understand each other, and to work together."* The story tells us that originally there was only one language spoken by humankind. The result of human arrogance was this one language gets divided into many languages and, as a punishment, the builders are scattered afar.

In our day the oligarchs of technology, social media, and communication promised us a world connected by technology. We would all be connected and enjoy ease of communication. Instead, we see people sitting at a restaurant not present to the people in front of them. Rather they are looking at the screens of their smart phones. Social Media has divided us by giving people permission to say horrible things that they would never say to anyone's face, and to "friend" or "unfriend" at will. Teachers and therapists find that children who are constantly on technological devices are losing the ability to have empathy. And our youth are experiencing record amounts of insecurity and depression because they measure their self-worth by "likes" on TikTok or Instagram. It is not that these devices are bad, but we must remember they serve us not that we serve them.

Our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles is meant to show us how the Spirit can reverse the confusion and division of Babel. In Pentecost the fire of compassion and understanding descended on the disciples who were gathered in prayer. The Spirit ignites in them the divine fire of love that transforms them. They begin to speak freely and in such a way that all were able to understand the Good News of Christ risen from the dead.

Pope Benedict said, *"At Pentecost, where there was division and estrangement, there are born unity and understanding."* The Holy Spirit sustains and unites humankind. The Spirit empowers us to overcome our own inner conflicts, divisions, and insecurities. With the Spirit we can transcend our personal limits to connect with others. That is why I love the memory of my Dad, a Spirit-filled man, who spoke no Spanish speaking to a Spirit-filled woman who spoke no English. And in the Spirit, all that any one of us can do is to just laugh!

Christ is risen!

Fr Ron

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