

Last night, I focused on the Tower of Babel because that was at the center of the vigil Mass' first reading. Today we have the antidote to the Tower of Babel: Pentecost. The same set of circumstances were present at both events. A group of people who spoke the same language were gathered together at a high place. God came down and caused them to speak in different tongues. Afterwards the people scattered. That's the basic outline; same circumstances but opposite results. After Babel, the people scattered in confusion and eventually went to war with each other. After Pentecost the disciples were able to proclaim the gospel in every language on earth. They scattered to the ends of the earth in order to teach and baptize and bring all nations into one church. Babel led to hatred and division. Pentecost led to unity in Christ.

The Tower of Babel is still very much with us. The people had settled there and built the tower to make a name for themselves, or to make themselves famous as it says in Spanish. The underlying meaning is that they were no longer satisfied with God's ways and wanted their own way instead. What was really at the root of that rebellion though? They doubted God's loving care for them. This was the same trap Adam and Eve fell into in the Garden of Eden. The devil tricked them into believing they could not trust God. The devil wasn't upfront and central at Babel but he was whispering the same lies to the people gathered there. Doesn't he whisper the same lies to us? Isn't doubt of God's goodness and loving care for us at the root of all our sins and disobedience? I bet if we are honest with ourselves and seriously look at our sins, we will discover that what leads us astray is that we doubt God's love.

God can do nothing but love us because God IS love. We need to remember, though, that love doesn't mean "anything goes." What did Jesus say in the gospel? "If you love me, you will keep my commandments...you will keep my word." He's speaking about our love for him. What didn't he say? He did not say, "If you do not keep my commandments I will stop loving you." This is stated clearly in Psalm 89; yes that is from the Old Testament, but the best commentary on scripture is scripture itself. Psalm 89 says: "If David's sons forsake my law and refuse to walk as I decree and if ever they violate my statutes, refusing to keep my commands; then I will punish their offenses with the rod, then I will scourge them on account of their guilt, **BUT I WILL NEVER TAKE BACK MY LOVE.**" If you love me, you will keep my commandments. If you break my commandments, you will have to pay a price, but I will always love you. You have to turn back to me and seek forgiveness, your separation from me breaks my heart, but I will never take back my merciful love. I will always love you."

The gospel also included Jesus' promise to send us an advocate, sometimes called the consoler, who will teach everything we need to know about Jesus and remind us of all he did. "All he did" includes sacrificing his life for us so that we can live.

The sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost did a lot more than remind us of that, but the core of the teaching is God's love for us. The Holy Spirit was sent upon the church to give her members the gifts they would need to proclaim Jesus everywhere they went. The Holy Spirit gave courage to the martyrs in the face of death. The Holy Spirit constantly draws people to Jesus so he can lead them to his Father. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for Jesus to always be physically present with us in the Eucharist—more about that on Corpus Christi. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray. The Holy Spirit wants to teach us to trust God enough that we can tear down the towers of Babel we have built up in our lives. Most of all, the Holy Spirit wants to teach us how much God loves us. This is a message the world desperately needs to hear. Are we ready to respond to that call and proclaim the truth of the gospel to the world?