

We just heard the Tower of Babel reading; I was going to change things up this year and use one of the other options but we need to recognize how that tower still exists today. Remember that the church gives us this reading to show how the Tower of Babel event was the anti-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.

Obviously there is still division and hatred and confusion, even within the body of Christ. This isn't because of a defect in the Holy Spirit or the Church to which the Spirit helped give birth; the problems come from us. Like the people at Babel, we are too focused on what WE want, even if it is contrary to what God wants.

Anytime we use the gifts and resources God has given to us in ways that are contrary to his will, the best we can hope for is confusion; often the consequences are far worse. The people at Babel built the tower to make a name for themselves; in Spanish, it says they wanted to make themselves famous. God had created them, called them his own people; he probably had his own name for them. They weren't satisfied with what God had done for them, and they wanted things on their own terms. God wasn't worried about this challenge to his divine authority, he was concerned about the consequences of what would happen when we use his gifts in ways he didn't intend for them to be used. Look at our modern world and how we have used the gifts God has given us. We have used them to do great things which have brought about great good, but then there are other things which have caused incredible pain, suffering, and despair. Atomic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Addictive drugs. Pornography. The confusion that comes from deciding for ourselves which gender we want to be. Massive confusion over marriage. God intended marriage to be between one man and one woman for life. Jesus tells us that our hardness of heart prompted Moses to allow divorce in certain cases. Has anyone ever looked at canon law on marriage or been through the annulment process or even experienced the work that goes into preparing a couple for marriage? "Why is it

so complicated, Father?” Because we took something God had created for our good and we messed with it to better reflect the way we want things to be. The worst thing we do is we decide for ourselves who can live and who must die and we refuse to respect the dignity of every single person; we refuse to recognize that every single person is created in the image and likeness of God.

That is the really big, societal level stuff. What about on a smaller level. It is “small” in the sense that it is personal, but it is really the most important level. I am talking about our own personal relationship with God. How many times do we come into the church and kneel down in front of Jesus’ body in the tabernacle and offer prayers for the things that cause us pain and then demand Jesus fix them the way we want them to be fixed? Some of you are familiar with the Surrender Novena. This prayer was composed by Servant of God Don Dolindo Ruotolo—who was for a short time the spiritual director for Padre Pio. There is a passage in this prayer in which Jesus says: “In pain you pray for me to act, but that I act in the way you want. You do not turn to me, instead you want me to adapt to your ideas. You are not sick people who ask the doctor to cure you, but rather sick people who tell the doctor how to. Do not act in this way.”

The Holy Spirit is sent to us as a gift; but we need to learn to accept it. 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 abandon the towers of Babel we have built up in our lives, because ultimately that is what the Tower of Babel was—a sign of our lack of trust in God’s loving care for us. Can we trust the Holy Spirit enough to lead us away from there so that we can experience the true peace which only Jesus can give us?