

Feast of Pentecost Vigil Mass A/2005

Before his Ascension into heaven, Jesus promised his disciples that he would not leave them alone and that he would be sending them his Spirit (John 14, 16. 26). Today we celebrate the feast of this gift sent by the risen Lord. To better understanding this feast we must go in the Old Testament and examine its origin. Pentecost was a very old and traditional Jewish feast, celebrated fifty days after the Passover of the exit from Egypt. It commemorated the arrival of the people of Israel at Mountain Sinai. It is there that God summoned Moses to the top of the mountain and gave him the Law for his people. Therefore, the feast of Pentecost was celebrated to thank God for the gift of law and for having established Israel as his people among all the people of the earth.

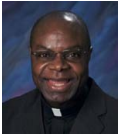
However, we know that Israel was not faithful to the alliance and the law of God; many times the people turned away from God. The first reading of the book of Genesis we have heard reminds of one of the consequences of this rebellion against God. As a matter of fact, the disobedience against God has brought division among humankind, dislocation and hatred towards one another and sin. To bring this people back to him again, God decided to change their hearts and to give them a new spirit. This is what is stated in the book of Ezekiel 36: *"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of the stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances"*.

With a new heart Israel would not need an external law, but would do good by following the impulses coming from inside him. That's what the law of the spirit is; it is the new heart, the life of God, which once enters a person, transforms and changes this person into a good fruit, capable of spontaneously producing the works of God.

St Paul states is right when saying: 'The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groaning. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will'. While at Babel people failed to understand others and moved away from one another; here the Spirit brings together once again the people who had dispersed. All those who allow themselves to be transformed by the word of the Gospel and by the Spirit now speak a language that everybody can understand and that can unite all together once again, that is, the language of love. It is the Spirit who forms this new family where all can understand and love one another. It is the Holy Spirit who, stirring in us the thirst and the hunger for God's word, pushes us to glorify God in our Body, in our mind and in our heart. *"Let anyone who thirsts come and drinks at the River of living water"* that gives the Son of Man, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Without the grace of the Holy Spirit, there is no spiritual life; there is no way of pleasing God. Only with the assistance of the Holy Spirit can a Christian lead a life of grace and of a true knowledge of God. It is the Holy Spirit who brings change and transformation in the life of those who are obedient to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, however, does not act automatically or magically. As no one can enter a door that is locked; neither can the Holy Spirit acts in us if we do not open our heart.

To do the will of God requires first of all our commitment to God as the one without whom our life has no meaning. The role of the Holy Spirit is, in fact, of helping us by his grace to adjust our lives to the reality of God's children. Hence, the importance of being attentive to his flow and his insights, so that we grow in faith and come to do God's will our lives. This is the prayer that should be ours in this celebration of the feast of the Pentecost. Let us ask God to pour out the Holy Spirit in our hearts, so that we may be able to renew our life by the strength of his grace. May the Spirit of harmony and unity guide those who work for peace and understanding between nations and peoples! May God bless you all!



Homily Date: May 14, 2005
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Contact: www.mbala.org
Document Name: 20050514homily.pdf