

## **Pentecost Sunday C/2010**

With the whole church, we celebrate today the feast of Pentecost. All the readings of this day invite us to reflect on the role of the Holy Spirit and his impact in our lives and in the life of the Church.

The feast of Pentecost finds its roots in the Jewish tradition. In Israel, the Passover was the commemoration of the liberation from Egypt. Fifty days after the Passover was the celebration of the gift of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The giving of the law to Moses was the beginning of the juridical foundation of Israel as a nation under God's guidance.

In presenting in the Acts of Apostles the feast of the Pentecost as happening 50 days after Easter, St Luke wants to tell us that it is not the Law of Moses that is the foundation of Christian community, but the new law that the Spirit of Christ has brought.

It is in that perspective we have to understand Jesus' words in today's Gospel when he says, "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you".

The Holy Spirit gave courage and voice to the disciples who were afraid of the Jews who condemned Jesus in the name of Jewish Law. Emboldened with such strength from on high, they will go out and bear witness to Jesus. In fact, they understood that they had a defender greater than the Jewish Law. Therefore, they could talk about Jesus and cross the barriers erected by the Jewish Law.

This fact is visible in the first reading as it describes the miracle of the transformation that appeared with the apostles. In fact, the Jewish law prohibited any Jew to have any relationship with a pagan or a foreigner. However, all that will change completely once the disciples were invested with the Holy Spirit. They welcomed all the peoples from the known world of their time, namely the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and Libya, Cyrene and Roma. They addressed these peoples in their own languages and proclaimed to them Jesus' salvation, according to the words the Spirit gave them.

This episode teaches us that one of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to bring people together beyond their linguistic, racial, national or cultural differences. Where people dig into conflicts of interest and fight against each other because they are different, the Spirit of Jesus is likely absent among them. The Spirit aims at uniting people, rather than dividing them. This is true for a parish community, for family members and for groups of people, as well.

This episode teaches us also that the Church is universal in its foundation. It is open to the whole world represented by these different nationalities and peoples gathered around the apostles. To pay attention to the universality of the Church is to accept the gifts the Holy Spirit gives to people in order to build and enrich the Church.

Another role the Spirit plays is to set people free from the bondage and the slavery of sin. One of the consequences coming out of such a vision is that, if we listen to the Holy Spirit and practice what he requires from us, we will receive eternal life. That is why St Paul says that “if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies”. It is all true that we will not be spared from physical death. However, we might be dead physically speaking, but because of the Spirit living in us, we will be given life back just as it happened to Jesus.

The feast of Pentecost reminds us that it is the Holy Spirit who gives us the courage to call God “Abba, Father!” By the dwelling of the Spirit within us, we become the adopted children of God and heirs with Jesus. In that sense, the merits of Christ and his glory become ours. His heritage becomes our inheritance, his Father becomes our father. As we share in his suffering and death, we will share also in his glory. Because we have a same lot with Jesus, when the Father looks at us, he recognizes in us his beloved Son, Jesus.

Pentecost’s celebration reminds that it is the Spirit who guides us to the knowledge of the whole truth about God and our salvation. It is the Spirit who keeps us in fidelity to the love of God and our fellows. “Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him”, St Paul says. If that is the case, it means that Pentecost raises a challenge before each one of us so that we yearn not only to possess the Spirit, but also to be docile to his recommendations.

This is something we have take to take seriously. It requires of each one of us a constant renewal of our lives so that we do not give in to the solicitations of the flesh. It requires of each one of us to keep God’s commandments and to put them into practice. It requires of each of us to keep Jesus’ word and to live by it.

The more we keep God’s commandments, the more we show that we care, because his love is in us. The more we keep his word, the more we show that we love him. There is no love of Jesus without keeping his commandments and his word.

In the end, the result is very simple: the Father will love us, because we love his Son. Because we love the Father and the Son by keeping the commandments, they will come to us and make their dwelling within us. With the Father and the Son dwelling in us, we become ourselves the temple of the presence of God and the witness to the Holy Spirit guiding us.

Let us pray so that the Holy Spirit inflames the whole Church and guides it. Let us ask the courage to permit the Holy Spirit to take control of our lives. Let us pray that Pentecost might happen in the heart of each one who seeks God. God bless you all.



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