

Pentecost Vigil Mass A/2017

The readings of this Pentecost Vigil focus on the presence of the Holy Spirit and his function in the Church. They invite us to open our hearts to him so that he might lead us to a true adoration of God.

The first reading describes the incident of the tower of Babel. First, it shows that the whole world spoke the same language. Then, it says that as people were taken by this advantage, they wanted to build a city and a tower with its top in the sky.

After that, the text recalls the counteraction of God who confused their speech to the point they could not build the city anymore and scattered them all over the earth lest they do whatever they presume to do.

What is behind this text is the idea that the excess of human pride can lead people to consider themselves as rivals of God. There is also the idea of the recognition and the affirmation of the diversity of people and languages in the world.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus talks about the Spirit that his disciples will receive from his Father. First of all, the Gospel reports the promise of Jesus to give water to drink to anyone who thirsts. Then, the Gospel gets specific by saying that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit he would give to those who believe in him.

What do we learn from today's readings? Today I want to talk about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Let me start this way. As human beings, we all have qualities and capabilities. It is these qualities and capabilities which are displayed in our skills and professional aptitudes. Anytime we show some competence and ability in a given domain, we display our qualities and capabilities.

However, we know by experience that, in spite of our skills and talents that people sometimes admire, we have also some limitations. We know that, though people respect us because of our competence and capabilities, we are not totally and completely perfect in everything we do. There are always some imperfections in us.

It even happens that our imperfections can be such that they become a major obstacle to our own development and for our relationship with others. If that is true in our daily experience with others, how much more can it be, on a spiritual level, for our relationship with God?

It is here that we have to understand the importance and the role of the Holy Spirit as presented in today's readings. First of all, the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. This evocation alone is already an indication that the virtues we attribute to the Father and the Son belong at the same time to the Holy Spirit, so that what is said of the Son and the Father can be equally said of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is an agent of perfection who brings God's work to perfection in people and in creation.

Moreover, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "Advocate", which means a defender and a helper, especially in difficult time. In that perspective, it is understandable that, without the help of the Holy Spirit, we can fail in many ways to respond adequately to God in our life. Positively, it means that the Holy Spirit is the "fruits-producer" who helps us be fertile in God's works. He is like "an aid" we receive from Jesus so that we are capable of acting

and living according to God's rules, because left with ourselves our imperfections can have the best of us.

Such a vision corresponds to what St Paul says in the letter to the Romans. In fact, St Paul states that "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".

In other words, it is the Holy Spirit who helps us pursue the will of God in our life and not our own designs. Moreover, it is the Holy Spirit who helps us do things that we cannot do with our own strength. He works through our weakness in order to make us strong and perform righteous deeds for the glory of the Holy Trinity. In that perspective we understand that anytime that things have been difficult for us and suddenly, to our astonishment, we make it, it was the Holy Spirit who cleared things out for us.

However, it is important to remember that the Holy Spirit will never push us to undertake actions that are against Jesus or his Church. I say this because people sometimes justify their actions by saying that their conscience told them, or they follow the insights of the Holy Spirit. That is why we better make sure that we are listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit and not the voice of our own desires. And we know which is which by checking this voice against the truth of God's Word.

It is for that reason that it is also important to remember that the Holy Spirit does not act magically. We have to be open to him with the whole of our heart and to cooperate. We have to be attentive to his insights so that we grow in the knowledge of Jesus and adjust our life to the reality of God's children.

Let us long for the gift of the Holy Spirit on this the feast of 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 we listen to the insights of the Holy Spirit instead of our own desires! May God bless you all!

Genesis 11: 1-9; Romans 8: 22-27; John 7: 22-27



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