

Pentecost Sunday C/2019

The readings of this solemnity of Pentecost talk about the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples. They show that the Holy Spirit was at the transformation of the first community of the believers and of the early Church. They invite us to live under the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that we please God.

The first reading describes the historical context of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the early Church. It highlights his impact on the community of the disciples. It also shows how he inspired the disciples to proclaim the marvels of God in different languages of the world.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is capable of unifying various peoples into one, in spite of their linguistic, racial, cultural or national differences. Another idea is the affirmation of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The last idea is related to the recognition of the action of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of the Gospel to the world.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus is giving the Holy Spirit to his disciples. First of all, the Gospel states that the doors of the place where the disciples were hiding were locked when Jesus appeared to them. Then, it says that Jesus wished them peace and showed them his scars. Finally, it reports on the gift of peace that Jesus gave to the disciples as well as the authority to forgive sins in his name.

What do we learn from these readings? Today I want to talk about the power of the Holy Spirit. Before I say something about it, let me remind us what we already know about the Holy Spirit, namely that he is one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Though he is distinct from the Father and the Son, he is nonetheless of the same nature with them. He lives in communion with the Father and the Son. He proceeds from the Father and the Son and with them, he receives the same adoration and the same glory.

The Holy Spirit can appear in different forms or manifestations. In the case of the baptism of Jesus, he appeared under the form of a dove. However, in the case of the first Pentecost, as we heard in the first reading, he appeared under the form of fire. Sometimes, there is no way of recognizing his invisible and mysterious presence than by the gifts he inspires.

In all the cases, the Holy Spirit manifests his presence as the power of God through which people are invested with special gifts and spiritual strength to lead their lives beyond human capacities, act according to God's will and for his glory.

Those gifts are of two kinds. Some, like wisdom, understanding, counsel, piety, fortitude, knowledge and fear of God, are destined for the sanctification of the person who possesses them. That is what we read in the book of the prophet Isaiah 11: 2-3.

Others, we would call charismata, are extraordinary favors given by God in order to help other people or the Church. As we heard in the second reading, St Paul dedicates the whole chapter 12 of the first letter to the Corinthians to those charismata.

That the Holy Spirit is the power of God that allows people to live beyond human capacities is a fact we find well described in the first reading. In fact, the crowd of people in pilgrimage in Jerusalem at that moment was astonished to see the disciples

coming out and speaking openly about Jesus. And yet, we know that following the death of Jesus, the disciples went in hiding because of fear of the Jews. Suddenly, they went out and started talking about Jesus. That change came from the power of the Holy Spirit who gave them courage to speak and bear witness to Jesus.

Moreover, each one of the different people gathered in Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover heard the disciples speaking in the language of their nation of the mighty acts of God. How would such a phenomenon be possible if it were not through the power of the Holy Spirit?

Because the Holy Spirit is the power of God, he manifests his presence by the transformation he operates within people and anything he touches. That is how he transformed the disciples from fearful people to courageous witnesses of the death and the resurrection of Jesus. That is how he operates in the sacraments of the Church by making our salvation effective through our profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

As St Paul says, “the manifestations of the Spirit are given for some benefit”. If that is true, then, it means that we complete each other by the gifts we have. Therefore, we cannot despise those who are not like us or who are less gifted than we are. On the contrary, we have to learn to appreciate each other because it is of the will of God that we are who we are and possess the gifts we have.

Moreover, there is no doubt that we are different from one another, as well as we come from different backgrounds. Because of those differences, our ways of being, acting and living are also different. And yet, in Jesus Christ, we are called to become the one people of God, the community of the believers, sharing in the same faith, living the same commitments before God and his Church as we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Therefore, we have to be careful for the way we present ourselves to others or treat them. Our individualities or particularities should not become an obstacle to forming the one people of God. Of course, there is no denial of individual riches and particularity; what is at stake is the fact that in order to become a people of God, we need to hold to what unites us rather than what divides us.

That is why it is important to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking within us because, after all, he aims at uniting people rather than dividing them. Moreover, it is impossible to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit and keep belittling people because they are not like us. May the Holy Spirit help us build a strong community in which we are all witnesses of the risen Lord! May the Holy Spirit help us, through the celebration of the Pentecost, to recognize our gifts and our sins so that we are forgiven by the Lord! May God bless you all!

Acts 2: 1-11; 1 Corinthians 12: 3b-7, 12-13; John 20: 19-23



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