

Pentecost Sunday Year “A”. May 30-31, 2020

Vigil Readings: Genesis 11:1-9; Romans 8:22-27; John 7:37-39

Mass During the Day: Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13; John 14:15-16, 23-26

It is a tremendous joy to celebrate a public Mass for the first time since March 18. This could not come at a more opportune time: first, it is Pentecost Sunday, the conclusion of the Easter season and a major feast in the Church’s liturgical year. Secondly, we desperately need the graces that flow from the Eucharist in our cities and indeed in our nation.

It is exceedingly important to invoke the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we seek to heal and bind the wounds that divide us. This will only happen if we pay heed to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, allowing its powerful wind to cool and sooth our souls.

Acts of the Apostles (1:15) relates that 120 people were gathered together in one place when the Holy Spirit came down upon them. St. Augustine notes that the sacred number of apostles (twelve) was multiplied by ten, yet each spoke the tongue of every nation signifying the unity of the Church amid the tongues of all the nations”

I am in the body of Christ, I am in the Church of Christ. If the body of Christ is now speaking in all the languages, [then] also I am indeed speaking in all languages; to me it is that of Greek, Syrian, Hebrew, it is of every nation, because in unity, I am of every nation.<sup>1</sup>

Today, while numerous languages are regularly spoken, in our nation there are significant differences in our outlook regarding culture, ethnicity, religion, social mores and politically, to name just a few. While nothing new, it has certainly been accentuated in the past generation. The kind of renewal needed today is utterly dependent upon our willingness to listen to one another and to work together to solve our ills, regardless of our differences.

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<sup>1</sup> *Augustine. Enarratio in Psalmum. CXLVII:19 (147:19)*

We are called to transform the world by means of the Gospel, and the Feast of Pentecost gives us the impetus for spreading the Word no matter what the obstacle or barrier. Sometimes they come upon us so suddenly, we are left scrambling.

Such was the case on Memorial Day in the officer involved death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Outrage soon followed as the circumstances became more widely known. But peaceful protest sadly gave way to civil unrest and rioting, even after criminal charges were filed. For several nights, chaos descended upon our cities. People are fearful and tense.

Now, we beg for the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon our land. Only that power truly transforms and brings about change. Unless and until hearts are changed, progress will stall. For this, we need Jesus.

Our Eucharistic fast of well over two months teaches us how much we need the spiritual nourishment for our souls. This is why faith needs enthusiasm, why grace builds upon our nature as social beings. Our faith is not merely a private affair, as some would have it. That approach is sure to fail. It is antithetical to the Catholic faith at its very roots. We are meant to gather and worship in community; our Minnesota bishops courageously stood up for that principle and finally they were heard.

So too, we are called to live in community and must stand up to any who would tear apart at society's fabric, even as we soberly examine our own consciences to see how our own attitudes need to change. We need to acknowledge the painful experiences of our brothers and sisters due to attitudes that are completely contrary to the Gospel.

In the daily readings during Easter, we have witnessed the early Church struggling to figure everything out, especially the mission to the nations. They disagreed, argued and had hard feelings; eventually they got it right.

Now is the time to answer with a resounding voice that we are one Body, composed of many members. Our differences must not be a source of division. The Spirit that was given at Pentecost animates the Church and provides the inspiration we need to build a more just society, one that respects both the dignity of each human person and the rights of all to live in security and liberty.

Most importantly, we must see Pentecost as a gift to all in the Church, according to our state in life. Each of us is animated by the Holy Spirit. Though the shepherds of the Church are specially guided by the Holy Spirit, none of us is lacking in guidance from above. Through Confirmation, we receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit to guide and protect us, to empower us to become soldiers of Christ in the world.

We have no need to fear; the Lord has not abandoned us. We are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and yet we exercise that in all humility, treating it not as a possession, but truly as a gift. May the Holy Spirit continue to enlighten our hearts and minds.

## Introduction to the Feast of Pentecost

Fifty days have now passed since we celebrated the great feast of Triumph and resurrection, the solemnity of Easter. The ancient Jews first celebrated this feast, commemorating the first fruits of the Spring harvest, fifty days after Passover.

This feast always has been a feast of joy and gratitude for the magnificent power of the Lord manifest in so many ways. Today, as Christians, we recall God's gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Let us pause to acknowledge our failings, confident that Christ who has conquered sin, will free us from ours.