

Homily of Pentecost Sunday of Year A

The Church was conceived when Jesus said to Peter, "You are the rock, upon you I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:18). But the Church was born on Pentecost Sunday with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles.

In the Old Testament, among the Jews, the feast of Pentecost was when Jewish pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem from various parts of the world: Europe, Asia and Africa to celebrate the festival of thanksgiving for the first fruits of their harvest (Numbers 28:26). While the crowds were celebrating, the apostles hid themselves in a room and stayed in prayer. We recall that after the death of Jesus, the apostles locked

themselves up in a room. Jesus rose from the dead and took them out of the locked room. Before his ascension, he told them to go and wait in Jerusalem until the coming of the Holy Spirit. The apostles, however, went back and locked themselves up in a room. This is how we return to the same problem we had been rescued. It took the power of the Holy Spirit to finally break the lock that held the apostles. The manifestation of the Holy Spirit attracted a large crowd. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter preached to the crowd. "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day" (Acts 2:41). It was indeed God's plan that the Holy Spirit came during the Pentecost celebration when a large number of people from various parts of the world were present to experience the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, to receive the Good News, to be baptized and to return to their countries as witnesses.

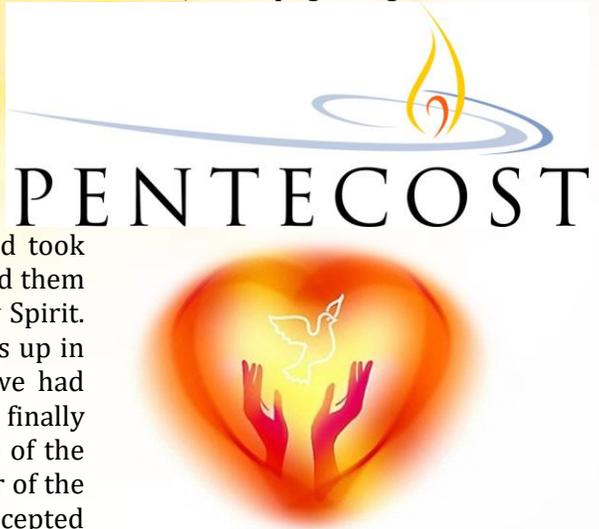
One of the experiences of the apostles was that they spoke in different tongues, in such a way that people from various parts of the world could understand them in their own language. In Genesis, God used languages to disperse the builders of the Tower of Babel (Genesis: 11:1-9). During the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, God used language to unite all peoples. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Catholic Church is to preach the message of Christ in different languages in all parts of the world.

We celebrate Pentecost to **refill**, to **renew** and to **revive** the unction of the Holy Spirit in us. The celebration is also a prayer for Pentecost experience. How do we recognize Pentecost experience?

First, Pentecost experience means liberation from whatever that locks up a person. The apostles were afraid and locked themselves up in a room. Some vices that can lock us up are fear, guilt, unforgiving hearts, anger, jealousy, greed, envy, etc.

Second, liberation leads to discovering a new mission. After their liberation the apostles fearlessly began the mission of evangelization. Liberation brings about newness and liveliness. Newness and liveliness are Pentecost experiences.

Third, Pentecost is not a onetime experience. If someone discovers a new mission and is not empowered to embark on the mission, the mission collapses. Therefore, a new mission requires a renewed and sustained spiritual energy. The renewed and sustained energy are Pentecost experiences.



Fourth, a person has experienced Pentecost when the person gets back on track. St. Paul writes, "I invite you to fan into flame the gift of God you received through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). God has given each person spiritual and physical gifts. It is also true that due to some reasons some people lose their gifts, and some people's gifts go dormant. Pentecost means gifts rediscovered, and gifts alive again.

Fifth, Pentecost means a conversion from sinful life to godly life. It means a spiritually transformed life. It means guided by the desires of the Spirit, and not by the desires of the flesh. Pentecost means living by the Spirit and walking by the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

Sixth, Jesus says, "But when he comes, the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you to all truth" (John 16:13). Pentecost means when I allow the Holy Spirit to teach me all truth. Then, I no longer see truth according to my subjective thinking and imagination, or according to my selfish desire; but according to the mind of God.

Seventh, Jesus says, "Peace be with you." "Receive the Holy Spirit." To have peace of mind is an important Pentecost experience. It means letting go of anxieties and worries, but trusting in God. This peace conquers all trials and defeats every temptation. This peace brings healing, humility, understanding and reconciliation. A person who has everything but has no peace has nothing. The person who has peace has everything.

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