

Homily of Pentecost Sunday, Year C, 2025

Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104:1, 29-34; 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23

The Third Commandment is: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8-10). Why then do we keep Sunday holy instead of Saturday (Hebrew: Sabbath)? It is because Jesus’ resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles occurred on Sunday.

Jesus gave his Church the power to make such changes when Jesus said to Peter, “I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:18-19). It was at this time that the Church was conceived. But the Church was born on Pentecost Sunday when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and empowered them to witness Christ to the world.

Originally, Sunday was a day associated with the worship of sun god in the Roman Empire. However, due to the events of the Resurrection and Pentecost, Christians began to gather on Sundays for worship. It was when Constantine, the Roman Emperor, converted to Christianity in 321 AD that he made Christianity the empire’s official religion and Sunday a day of worship and rest. It is important also to note that we are called “Roman” Catholics because the city of Rome is the center of the Catholic Church’s activities and we use Roman Rite liturgy, the liturgical rite of the Diocese of Rome.

Among the Jews in the Old Testament, the feast of Pentecost was when Jewish pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem from various parts of the world to celebrate the festival of thanksgiving for the first fruits of their harvest (Numbers 28:26). It was on such a feasting time that God chose to send the Holy Spirit so that people from various parts of the world could witness the event.

The first reading shows that while the crowds were celebrating, the apostles were in prayer in the upper room. The impact of their Pentecost experience attracted the crowd “who were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language.” One of the great miracles of the descent of the Holy Spirit is that God translated and transmitted the message of the apostles in Aramaic to the understanding of those who spoke other languages. When people ask, “How was that possible?” I ask them, “How is Artificial Intelligence possible?” I ask them, “Which is greater, Divine Intelligence or Artificial Intelligence?” “Was it not by the power of Divine Intelligence that the world was created?”

The Pentecost event takes us back to Genesis, where God used language to disperse the builders of the Tower of Babel (Genesis: 11:1-9). On Pentecost Sunday, God used language to unite all peoples. One of the lessons of the events of the Tower of Babel and Pentecost is that what we communicate has the power to build or destroy, unite or scatter, give life or take life. “Some wound as they speak, like swords; but the tongue of the wise heals” (Proverbs 12:18). Where do I belong? Wounding tongue or healing tongue?

In the first reading, the apostles were in isolation. The Holy Spirit broke through the isolation and descended upon them. In the gospel, the apostles locked themselves up for fear of the Jews. Jesus broke the lock, came in, stood in their midst, and blessed them with peace and the Holy Spirit. It is our prayer that by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus, every lock, every fear, and every isolation

be broken. St. Paul declares, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17). May we receive God’s peace, which surpasses all understanding. (Philippians 4:7).

What is a new Pentecost?

1. A new Pentecost is when a person, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is liberated from inhibitions (whatever is weighing on him/her). It is an experience of spiritual freedom.
2. A new Pentecost is when a person, after undergoing liberation, experiences a new vision and discovers a new mission. After their Pentecost, the apostles experienced a new vision (to go out) and a new mission (proclaim the Good News). May the Holy Spirit direct us to discover something new in our vocation, career, ministry, profession, and other areas of life.
3. A new Pentecost is when a person is empowered to carry out the discovered mission. A person can experience liberation and discovery but lacks the willpower and the zeal to undertake the discovered mission.
4. A new Pentecost is when a person experiences a renewal. That is, the person fans into flame inactive God’s gifts in him or her. God has given each of us special spiritual and physical gifts. We received these gifts at birth, or at the reception of various Sacraments, or at various times of prayer, or at some spiritual encounter. At some point, the gifts can become inactive or dormant. A new Pentecost is fanning the gifts into action again. St. Paul urges us, “I invite you to fan into flame the gift of God you received through the laying on of my hands. For God did not confer on us a spirit of bashfulness, but of strength, love and good judgment” (Timothy, 2 Tim 1:6).
5. A new Pentecost means a conversion from a sinful way of life to a godly way of life. It means to be led by the Holy Spirit to a transformed life. It can be a transformed prayer life, or transformed from addiction, or transformed from unforgiveness, or transformed from anger, or transformed from sin of the flesh and so on.

We pray for a new Pentecost in our lives, in our homes, in our community, in our parish, in our country, and in our world. Amen.

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