

Homily of Pentecost Sunday, Year A, 2026

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.

The Church was conceived 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). But the Church was born on Pentecost Sunday with the descent of the Holy Spirit.

From Easter Sunday to Ascension is forty days. From Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday is fifty days. One of the meanings of forty in the Bible is that it is a period of transition after which something new and significant happens. One of the meanings of fifty in the Bible is that it is a period of fullness of time. From Easter Sunday to Pentecost, the whole world transited from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The birth of the Church and witnessing Jesus by the disciples was the fullness of time.

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, was converted to Christianity in 321 AD that he made Christianity the empire's official religion and Sunday a day of worship and rest.

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 names the various parts of the world: Parthians, Medes, and Elamites (Iran), Mesopotamia (Iraq), Judea (Israel), Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia (Turkey), Egypt and Libya (Africa), and Rome and Cretans (Europe).

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 greatest miracles of the descent of the Holy Spirit is that the message of the apostles reached the ears of their hearers in the hearers' language. The hearers called it "the mighty acts of God."

The Pentecost event takes us back to Genesis when language was the cause of the dispersing of the builders of the Tower of Babel (Genesis: 11:1-9). On Pentecost Sunday, God used language to unite all peoples. The dispersing of the builders teaches us that divergent and contrasting and contradicting minds and interpretations result to disintegration. While to be of one mind and of one understanding bring unity.

In the first reading, the apostles were in isolation. The Holy Spirit broke through their isolation and descended upon them. In the gospel, the disciples locked themselves up for fear of the Jews. Jesus broke through the lock, came in, stood in their midst, blessed them with peace and breathed the Holy Spirit on them. 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. Jesus blessed his disciples with peace. May he bless us with the peace that 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 (physical or spiritual barriers) and the person receives spiritual freedom.
2. A new Pentecost is when a person, after undergoing liberation, experiences a new vision and discovers a new mission or a new horizon. After their Pentecost, the apostles experienced a new vision (go out) and a new mission (proclaim the Good News).
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. St. Paul urges us, "I invite you to fan into flame the gift of God you received through the laying on of my hands ..." (2 Timothy 1:6).
5. A new Pentecost is a conversion to a transformed life. It can be a transformed prayer life, or transformed from addiction, or transformed from disagreement and disunity, 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. The witnesses of the Pentecost event called it "the mighty acts of God." We pray that we witness God's mighty acts in us and among us. Amen.

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