

Homily for Pentecost Sunday 05-06-2022 by Fr. Lubem Waya, osj

First Reading: Acts 2:1-11

Psalm: Psalm 104

Second Reading: Romans 8:8-17

Gospel: John 14:15-16.23-26

WHAT IS GOD'S SPIRIT ASKING OF YOU TODAY?

Today we mark Pentecost, the 50th day after Christ's resurrection which is a unique occasion in the life of the Church. On this day, we commemorate the official birthday of the Church because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Mary and the apostles, and the attendant spiritual gifts and blessings of God which have been made possible through the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven. Simultaneously also, today we officially close Eastertide, having commemorated the mystery of the Lord's resurrection for 50 days. What are we going to take home with us?

After Christ's resurrection, He breathed on His disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit, the same way God breathed life into Adam in the book of Genesis and he became a living being. So, the gift of the Holy Spirit we receive today is an impartation of "new life" into us for love, joy, peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God and with one another. God's Spirit also gives us the courage to conquer our fears, cry Abba Father, overcome our sins, and be aflame for God advancing new frontiers of evangelization. With the gift of God's Spirit, a new life leading to a new creation has begun for us all, just the same way a new and universal mission is being officially born in the Church. This Spirit which occasioned the start of Christ's public ministry also descends today on the apostles and Mary like tongues of fire, enabling God's Church to break out of the demography of Judaism to the embrace of all peoples of the earth including you and me, expanding the universal mission of spreading God's love. What is God's spirit asking of you for Himself and His Church today?

Though diverse like the disciples, we are called to be united by faith and purpose in speaking the language of love, so that we can understand one another. This means that God's Spirit is a spirit of unity and whoever dwells in dissention does not have God's spirit in them. In God's Spirit, even our diversity becomes a source of unity and strength, and not weakness. That is why St. Paul tells us in the second reading that the Spirit Himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God, heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing in His sufferings so as to share His glory (cf. Rom. 8:16-18). Hence, today we talk of the four marks of God's Church as; one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, signifying that the Church is as diverse as she is united, thus, universal. Therefore, any gathering lacking in any of these four distinctive and defining marks can qualify as anything but God's Church. Ask yourself, do you stand for unity or division in your home, church, place of work, school, business, etc? It means you do not have the Spirit of God dwelling in you if you stand for division.

The unity in diversity of Pentecost is a deliberate contrast to the division at the Tower of Babel, when all the peoples of the world were split up by their inability to understand one another's languages. Today instead, we see that we can only understand one another when we speak in love. Our human richness and strength as a Church can only come from the unity of our diversity. And unity not built on love which is the language of God, cannot lead to understanding and strength, but instead, misunderstanding and division. God's Spirit is a spirit of love that liberates and gives understanding. For this, Christ promises to ask the Father to send the Advocate who will be with us forever, but if and only if we love Him and keep His commandments. The benefits of having Him as our advocate are enormous. He would not only teach us everything, and remind us all that Christ has taught us, but as 'paraclete' too, He will be by our side to comfort, help, guide and direct us even when life's paths get complicated. He remains also eternally our 'advocate' throughout the centuries to guide us as a Church into all truth. His presence will continue to deepen our understanding of the mysteries of God over the centuries and inspire us to respond in a Godly manner to the challenges posed by every age. May God's Holy Spirit come down upon us and fill our hearts with the fire of His love to do His will. Amen.