

PENTECOST SUNDAY—DOMINGO DE PENTECOSTES

June 12, 2011—Dignity, New York

Come, Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray

O God, who has taught the hearts of your faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

It is the great day of Pentecost—50 days now since we celebrated the incredible joy of the feast of the resurrection of Jesus from among the dead. And today our joy is complete, for God's Spirit, the powerful, wonderful, life-giving, creative Spirit of the living God, has been poured into our hearts. Today is fulfilled the words of the prophet Joel:

Thus says the Lord:

I will pour out my Spirit on **all** of humanity.

Your sons and daughters shall prophesy,

your old men and women shall dream dreams,

your young men and women shall see visions;

even upon the servants and the handmaids,

In those days, I will pour out my Spirit.

And I will work wonders in the heavens and on the earth.

The Spirit of the living God is promised to all humanity. Sons and daughter, men and women, young and old, people of all classes—even the servants and the handmaids—all people will be given to drink of the Spirit of the living God. And all will prophesy and dream and see visions—and God will work wonders in the heaven and on the earth.

And the reading today from the Acts of the Apostles shows us another feature of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit—it is a Spirit that does not discriminate. The Spirit is freely and lavishly given.

It is a Spirit that wants to communicate to people of every race and language and way of life, so that the disciples, once they have received the fire of the Spirit, go forth speaking in foreign tongues so that people from every corner of the ancient world will be able to understand and come to share this very same Spirit.

And Jesus breathed on them on that the very night of his resurrection from the dead, he breathed on them with the very 'ruah' breath of the living God, and he said to them—"Receive the Holy Spirit."

Receive my Spirit. Receive the Spirit, the Comforter, who will be with you when I no longer am. I will not leave you orphans. Receive the Spirit, Holy Wisdom, Sophia, who will teach you all things. Receive the Paraclete, the Advocate, who will strengthen you and give you strength in all adversity and will teach you how to respond when you are ill treated and persecuted because of me. Receive the very breath of the living God, you live no longer for yourself alone but for God and for the life of the world.

We have in us the very Spirit of the living God. Quietly, most of the time, she works in our hearts and in the course of all of human history. The 2nd Eucharistic Prayer for Masses of Reconciliation speaks of the Spirit this way:

Your Spirit changes our hearts:
enemies begin to speak to one another,
those who were estranged join hands in friendship,
and nations seek the way of peace together.
Your Spirit is at work
when understanding puts an end to strife,
when hatred is quenched by mercy,
and vengeance gives way to forgiveness.

All of us here have been given to drink of the Spirit of the living God. She does not belong to the church alone, for she hovers over the waters of all of creation—sustaining and protecting and guiding. But the Spirit of the living God, the powerful Spirit of the One who raised Christ from among the dead, that Spirit has been given especially to those who follow after Jesus—to his disciples—to you and me. In a special way we who are the church have been given to drink of this one Holy Spirit of God.

We have been baptized. We have been plunged into the life-giving waters of the death and resurrection of the Lord. And in this baptism, we have been given, each of us our share of the Spirit of the Lord.

And so today, we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost. The Spirit of the living God has been poured out upon us—upon the church—through our baptism and through our confirmation. We are the holy people of God, filled with God's Holy Spirit.

And so it is good for us to remember today, the day we call the birthday of the church, something it is easy for us to forget.

First, there is the church.

First, there is the church.
First, there is the church.

I say it three times, and maybe should repeat it a few more times, because it is something that is hard for us to remember. First, there is the church.

Unless we understand this, we can never really come to a correct understand of what it means to minister or serve within the church.

Because somewhere along the line, we fell into the unbiblical and unchristian trap that those who serve or minister in the church come first—the clergy come first . . . and only then the church. We have the crazy idea that God makes the pope and bishops first, and then the pope and the bishops and the priests and the deacons somehow create the church, the community of believers.

Today though, we celebrate the entire church filled with God's Holy Spirit.

God calls us, God enters into covenant with us as a people, the holy people of God, the church, a community of the initiated—those who have been baptized and have shared the sacred meal of the Eucharist.

All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit. In Jesus Christ and in his Spirit, there is no longer male and female, slave and free, Jew or non-Jew, no longer old or young, rich or poor, all of us are one in the Lord.

In its roots, the church as the people of God is an exquisitely democratic and egalitarian gathering of people. What we know of as the institution that is the church is secondary. It is meant to provide structure and support so that the extraordinary outpouring of God's Spirit upon all of the faithful can be coordinated and directed.

But so often, still, we must confess, this is still not the case.

Let us pray tonight for ourselves and for the whole church of God filled with God's Spirit. May the gifts all of us—men, women, gay, straight, young and older, richer and poorer, popes and bishops and priests and deacons and men and women religious, and the whole crowd of the lay men and women of the church, people of every race and language and way of life, may the many gifts which the Spirit pours out upon us be valued and celebrated. Let us continue to pray and agitate that the institutional church may come more and more to value and celebrate the gifts and talents of women, of the poor, of immigrants and of those who speak different languages, and of the gay and lesbian community.

And, may this Holy Spirit of God fall afresh upon each of us here tonight.

Come Holy Spirit. Fill the hearts of your faithful.