
Sunday, May 20, 2018 - Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-11 | Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34 | 1 Corinthians 12:3^b-7, 12-13 -or- Galatians 5:16-25 |
John 20:19-23 -or- John 15:26-27; 16:12-15

GLANCING THOUGHTS

In the Gospel Reading, Jesus foretells that he will send the Holy Spirit on his disciples. And on this Sunday we celebrate that coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.

But Genesis tells us that the Spirit was in the world from the beginning of creation. The Spirit moved upon the face of the waters when God first made heaven and earth. From that beginning all throughout the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is present in the world.*

So why in the Gospel Reading does Christ say that he will send the Spirit? How does he send the Spirit if the Spirit was already in the world in Old Testament times?

The first thing to notice is that, in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is mentioned as coming only on a few particular people, often just people marked out for some particular purposes by God. But after Christ sends the Spirit at Pentecost, the Spirit comes on every single Christian. As the Second Reading explains, every person who says (and believes) that Jesus is Lord has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him.

Furthermore, after Pentecost, the Spirit that comes is the Spirit of the resurrected Christ, as well as the Spirit of the Father. And so when, after Pentecost, Christ's followers are filled with the Spirit, they are unified with Christ, because his Spirit is within them.

At Pentecost, then, the Spirit comes on all those who believe in Christ; and it comes on them forever, for their whole lives, provided only that they remain in Christ. Those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them are made into the body of Christ, because the Spirit of the resurrected Christ is in them.

So that is why the Spirit comes at Pentecost to inaugurate the new age which God promised long ago. Through his prophet Joel (Joel 2:28), God promised that in the messianic age God would pour out his Spirit on all his people; and then God himself would be the hope and the strength of his people (Joel 3:16).

We are included in that promise too. By God's spirit that dwells in us, we are made one with our risen Lord.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Did the Holy Spirit come only once in history, as in the upper room? Or do you see the Holy Spirit as dynamic and constant in every life? Explain. How were the disciples different after the Spirit's arrival? Are you confident that the Spirit is with you? Discuss.
- St. Alphonsus Rodriguez was a Jesuit Brother (1533-1617) whose job was doorkeeper of the Jesuit College in Majorca. For forty years. Would this spiritual gift of service compare to that of St. Francis Xavier, who converted whole countries? How?
- Jesus "breathed" on them. How does this relate to Genesis 2:7, "God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life?" What is the significance for you? How important is the Holy Spirit to you?

FROM POPE FRANCIS

In his homily at the "Mass for the Feast of Pentecost with New Movements," Pope Francis asks the following questions:

Are we open to 'God's surprises'? Or are we closed and fearful before the newness of the Holy Spirit? Do we have the courage to strike out along the new paths which God's newness sets before us, or do we resist, barricaded in transient structures which have lost their capacity for openness to what is new?

~Pope Francis, Holy Mass with the Ecclesial Movements, ¶2, May 19, 2013

LIVING THE READINGS

- Include the Holy Spirit in your prayers this week. The Prayer to the Holy Spirit is a great place to begin!

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. And kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you will renew the face of the earth.
Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit help us to relish what is right and always rejoice in your consolation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*