

Pentecost Sunday
May 31, 2020
“The Gift of Jesus and His Continued Presence”

Acts 2:1-11
1 Cor 12:3...13
Jn 20:19-23

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Not long ago, in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic – and while everyone was sheltering in place – I received an anonymous letter. It was from someone who was devastated by the American bishops’ order suspending Mass and all other religious gatherings.

The writer seemed to be very upset both spiritually and psychologically. The reception of Jesus in the Eucharist had been their almost sole source of strength and courage in the past. They needed the Eucharist as if it were the only way to be one with Jesus – and, thus, be able to survive the pain and the hardship which are part of everyone’s life.

The writer implied that the clergy had deserted Jesus much like the disciples did after the first Eucharist on the night before he died! We were certainly not doing what we were ordained to do!

Unfortunately, the writer seemed to be unaware of many things:

- that each believing person possesses Jesus within their heart and soul –
- that we must have a personal relationship with Jesus and a life with him apart from any tangible sign or sacrament –
- that the grace of God and the power of God are always there for us if we ask for them –
- that Jesus is present in the scriptures as the divine Word of God –
- that Jesus is in our midst whenever 2 or 3 are gathered in his name – probably even through SKYPE –
- that Catholics and other Christians survived and grew in their faith while prisoners of war for 3 or 4 years, or even longer, without the Eucharist –
- that we have an obligation under the 5th Commandment not to inflict harm on others or cause them to die by spreading the virus –
- that our present situation is only temporary – but like the Spanish Flu of 1918-1920, might have a 2nd or 3rd wave –
- that Jesus said there is no greater love than to lay down our life – or give up anything less – so that another can live!

What we all need to survive any crisis is the presence of God within us. The Father is always there with His creative life-force to sustain us, body and soul. Jesus is always there for us and will be with us until the end of time through his gift of the Holy Spirit which we celebrate on this great feast of Pentecost.

The Gospel for today tells us that Jesus bestowed that Spirit on the night of his Resurrection. But even before that bestowal, Jesus gifted the disciples with his peace. In fact, he said those wonderful words twice: “Shalom!” “Peace be with you!” Then he gave them the Holy Spirit and told them to carry on his work – especially the work of healing and forgiveness which we all so desperately need!

The second outpouring of the Holy Spirit was on that first Pentecost. The disciples had been paralyzed by mortal fear only moments before – Nevertheless, with that outpouring they became changed! They became absolutely fearless! Moreover, the good people who had assembled outside were also gifted. Each was able to hear what the apostles said in their own language! Moreover, hundreds became believers and new disciples on that day!

In the second reading, St. Paul teaches us that we can’t even acknowledge that “Jesus is Lord” without the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Godhead, the Trinity, has a unique plan and purpose for each of us during our time here. All of our gifts come from the Holy Spirit. The service we render comes from Jesus who commissions us. The creative work we do is empowered by our divine Father! And only fear and selfishness can impede us from doing Christ’s work and becoming who God has called us to be!

Fear always paralyzes us and keeps us from doing what we should and must. However, the gift of the Spirit casts out fear. The Holy Spirit enables us to accept mystery. It enables us to live in mystery without knowing the “what” – or understanding the “why” of the Father’s design and plan. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit always brings us peace – of mind, heart, and soul – a peace which “surpasses understanding”!

Our personal, interior peace will enable us to accept whatever might come. It enables us to rejoice both in good times and in bad, and in health or in sickness – knowing that we have no lasting city here on earth – But that we have an eternal home already prepared for us in the Kingdom of Heaven!

And so, Brothers and Sisters, let us open ourselves to what the Holy Spirit continues to be for us. May we become fearless before whatever we must face in whatever lies ahead – And may our personal, interior relationship with Jesus sustain us even when we cannot celebrate the great gift of his Eucharist!

Amen.

May 31, 2020

Msgr. Russell G. Terra