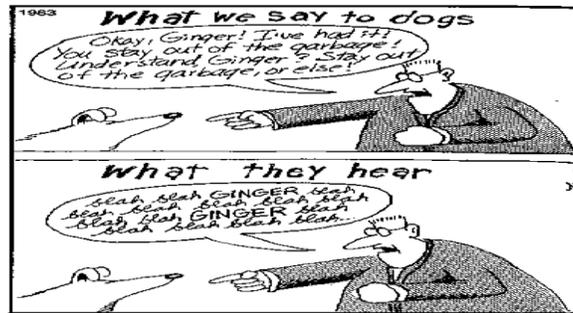


St Pius & St Anthony Homily Pentecost Sunday Year C1



Today is Pentecost! The Holy Spirit of God in all its splendor is poured out upon the Church, making for quite a dramatic scene. All the fireworks, sound and sights, followed by a great Testimony speech of Peter resulting at the end of the day with “about three thousand accepted the message and were baptized that day” (Acts 2:41). I surely wonder at how the crowd was experiencing all of this revelation of the Holy Spirit. All of it together, how did the crowd take it in? It had to be overwhelming. Acts 2:6 describes the initial effect Pentecost had upon the crowd as one of confusion, telling us “they were confused because each one heard the apostles speaking in his own language.” So it would seem they were just speaking past each other, not breaking through to one another in the beginning. We’ve probably all had that happen, when what we say, just doesn’t get past the “brain-gate” of the other person. They just can’t hear/accept what you say. I know I heard a parent need to tell a child recently in the store who was so persistently asking for a toy, “No, again. What part of ‘No’, are you not understanding?” Or one of my favorite Far Side cartoons, shows a master scolding his dog for making a mess on the floor, and the first box is titled “What we say to our dogs” and the master is wagging his own finger at the dog saying, “Ginger, I’ve had it, One more accident and it is in the crate for good for you, stop going on the kitchen floor. Ginger, no more messes or you stay in the crate.” Then the second box shows the same scene with title “What dogs hear” and it shows the dialogue balloon, saying, “Ginger, blah, blah blah, Ginger.....blah blah, blah...” Of course, dog’s tail is happily wagging away all through it-She only hears her name affirmatively! That’s an example of different languages, without a common message understood-they are not truly speaking to one another. Or here is an example, of two brothers told by their mom “No ice cream, until the den is cleaned up” The first son heard, “No ice cream” and he gave up defeated and went off to his room. But the second son heard “Until the den is cleaned up” and he went straight to work. Each child has his own language: the second one loves

ice cream so he will do anything to get some, while for the first one the word 'cleaning' is not in his vocabulary. He doesn't know a thing about it, so give up!

Yet, from the initial confusion we hear about on Pentecost, that first crowd to experience the Holy Spirit, we learn that they marvel for a moment, and then moved by that same Spirit, many come to believe the news of Jesus and accept discipleship with Him (again it said '3,000 joined their number that day'). There was some kind of major breakthrough in communication for so many people to have their hearts touched and convert to Christ. What happened? I suggest that God spoke to them in the Holy Spirit through the apostles, and they heard God's universal language of the heart. Somehow, God used the apostles as vessels of His message and they broke through and spoke to each person there, of the love and kingdom of God for them to accept. And so many did. What is that language used? I suggest it is the Holy Spirit Himself. The Universal language of the heart, we call it love, that you can hear and know, by tone or over time, in a person's voice. We all have experiences of universal languages. Maybe we don't think of them that way. But I can imagine that we all understand the universal language of love between a parent and child, that concern and affection expressed between a mother/father and his/her child. That is universal-we all come from families. We call that the language of love-language of the heart, Or I suggest it's the language of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God Himself loving others in/through us. But there are other universal languages, such as music. Don't we all understand it? How many times do we say things like 'Don't ask me to name the lyrics, but that is my favorite song!' or "I love that melody, and that change in rhythm at just the right moment-gosh that moves me so." Another universal language is everyone's favorite: food! We all eat, and know the bonding that goes on with the sharing of foods, or what do they say but "When you are at our table, you are family". Food shared is a language we all understand. So, we do have experience of universal languages *that can draw all people together*: again, the language of the heart-love, the language of music, and the language of food. Yet, most powerful of all is this language of God's Holy Spirit on demonstration in the Pentecost Event. The Spirit is talking and He opens all of our hearts' ears to hear Him together. Yey, we may still ask, "Give me some of the words-What is the exact vocabulary of the Spirit." I would suggest that the vocabulary of the Spirit is what our Catholic Tradition calls the **gifts and fruits of the Spirit**. Those words are what we want on our lips to be spoken and shared with others to help bring them to Him. We call the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Counsel, Courage, Piety and Fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:1-3) and similarly we recognize the

12 fruits of the Holy Spirit as 'charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity (Gal 5:22-23). When we find this vocabulary (the gifts and fruits) in others and express them ourselves, we are experiencing the Spirit in action. The Holy Spirit's work at Pentecost was to 'fire-up' and animate those first disciples to move out of themselves and spread to the world the good news of life in Christ: speaking a new language and living a new life. That mission-that job is also universal and we are called to do the same. To speak the language of God to others: that vocabulary again being the gifts of 'Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Counsel, Courage, Piety and Fear of the Lord' and what we are mostly after the fruits of "charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity" Those qualities (that vocabulary of the Spirit) among Jesus' disciples are the best witness testimony of invitation to others for having them join to, the fellowship of Christ in His Church. That is our Pentecost challenge: to speak the new and universal language of God's Spirit (His gifts and fruits) to others. Come, Holy Spirit, enkindle in us the fire of your love, renew the face of the earth!