

*We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.*

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*Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.* This was the slogan of the men who tried to build the tower of Babel which we read of in the Book of Genesis. And before the city and tower could be finished, the Lord came down to see what the children of men were building. God saw that if He allowed this to continue, nothing would stop them. So, according to the Scriptures, the Lord confused their language and scattered them across the face of the earth. This Bible story is thought to explain why there are so many languages and dialects across the earth. It is mostly unknown if there was ever a literal tower named Babel, though there may be some connection to the ancient problematic Biblical city of Babylon. The problem with the tower of Babel was not that men had come together to build a tall building, but that they were determined to exalt themselves and attempted to make themselves like God. It should also be noted that this story is in the same book with the stories of the Garden of Eden, Noah and the Flood, and the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In each of these stories man tries to exalt himself above God. Evidently, not much has changed since Genesis.

Yet Pentecost is the reversal of the story of the tower of Babel. Instead of a scattering confusion and anarchy, at Pentecost, God has brought sinful humanity together through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit. Here God exalts man by pouring into Him His Holy Spirit. And those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them no longer say *Let us make us a name...* but instead *Let us glorify the Name of God*. This is what happened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. The Lord, the Holy Spirit, came down in tongues of fire upon all who were in the Upper Room, and the disciples began to speak in languages they had not known before. The crowd that gathered down below, representative of every nation, were amazed that they could hear and understand the preaching of these simple Galileans, each in their own language. Then stood up Simon Peter, a man who was an uneducated fisherman, except for having been Jesus' disciple, and preached to the group, glorifying the Name of Jesus Christ, and three thousand souls were converted on the spot. See how the

Holy Spirit transformed this man who had denied the Lord three times before the Crucifixion.

Pentecost, the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, is transformational. It is the Holy Spirit who takes simple fishermen and makes them Apostles to the world. It is the Holy Spirit who takes fallen, sinful humanity and turns them into the Saints of God. It is the descent of the Holy Spirit, which is the capstone of the tower that the Lord has built for us, that great city and a tower that reaches to the heavens, which is none other than His Church. Therefore, God put a stop to the building of the tower of Babel and condemned Babel as false unity, as a building up that really was a tearing down of human nature through self-worship. God separated them by languages, so that the children of men may learn move past their self-worship and narcissism and seek Him, that through Him they may be in perfect relationship with each other and the Church. For it was only after the Lord had come down from heaven and walked among the children of men, and died for them that they could then become followers of Jesus, bound together through His Love, allowing the Holy Spirit to make His home in them by placing the

Name of Jesus in their mouths and in their hearts. As blessed John Keble the English priest and poet writes it was only until the descent of the Holy Spirit that we could not just *be convicted of sin but convicted of grace*.

This incredible grace is that we have received the Holy Spirit through the tower that the Lord built. He has united all the children of men that come to Him through His Church. This is true unity, unity found only through the waters of Baptism and the unction of Confirmation. For in Baptism, we were washed and set apart for Christ when we received the gift of the Holy spirit. In Confirmation, the gift of the Holy Spirit is unwrapped and unfolded in our lives. It is as some have called it the ordination of the laity, the equipping of every member of the church for their particular calling and vocation in this life. And these gifts are diverse, as St. Paul writes to the Ephesians, and *He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the quipping of the saints for the work*. Because the Holy Spirit has bound us all together, grafting us all into the Body of Christ, that our giftings, talents, and vocations are bestowed upon us to edify the entire Church, the entire Body of Christ, rather than ourselves.

We must always remember that when the Holy Spirit is unwrapped in our lives, families, and churches, the gift of unity is given to us with, most importantly, the virtue of love or charity. For even if we have all the gifts of the Holy Spirit; of tongues, healing, prophecy, discernment, or even knowledge, without love, these gifts of the Holy Spirit are useless. The Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the Love of God. We learn from this that it is good to desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but it is even better to pursue the love of God. The children of men who tried to build the tower of Babel pursued love of themselves. It has been said that if they had accomplished their goal they could have never been saved. This is the key to the gifts of the Holy Spirit: we must seek God and His Love, and not ourselves. We must put ourselves last. This is what we promised in Baptism and Confirmation, to follow God, to love Him, and to grow in the strength of the Holy Spirit, to grow in unity with His Church and our fellow Christians.

But we are not always very good at doing this. We pursue ourselves and our own interests instead of God's. As Bishop Fulton Sheen once said, *Even though we are God's chosen people, we often behave more like*

*God's frozen people--frozen in our prayer life, frozen in the way we relate with one another, frozen in the way we celebrate our faith.* Let us pray today that the Holy Spirit will descend on us again and warm and thaw hearts grown cold in sin from seeking our own ambitions, that our hearts will be enflamed and drawn closer to God in prayer, that the dross in our souls be purified and our connections with each other strengthened, and may God renew and revive our faith.

*Come, Holy Ghost; cleanse our minds and consciences, sanctify our hearts, wills, and bodies with thine heavenly visitation, that our Lord Jesus Christ when he cometh may find us a temple meet for his abiding. Amen.*