

Pentecost Sunday  
May 23, 2021  
“Touched by Grace”

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

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

At some time or another, most people have a truly wonderful and unforgettable experience. Something happens that overwhelms us – It brings us up short. Tragic calamities can also overwhelm us – but in a negative way. They also can have a great impact on our lives.

However, I’m speaking, instead, of good things – or beautiful things – that seem to touch our hearts and souls. They are so wonderful, that, hopefully, we never forget them. Moreover, whatever touches us in that particular moment or encounter might not be experienced in the same depth by someone standing right next to us.

The experience might be a magnificent sunrise or sunset, a beautiful or powerful waterfall, the grandeur of a panoramic vista, a symphony, an act of heroism which saves our life, and even the returned love of a spouse or friend. In any event, in that moment, we know that we have been touched by God’s grace!

The disciples of Jesus each had a life-changing experience when they met Jesus and began to follow him. But their hearts and souls were devastated by his tragic suffering, crucifixion, and death. Yet, just three days later, they were shaken again with his risen presence. And then after 40 days, Jesus, seemingly, left them, once again.

No doubt, the disciples were terribly unsettled, had unanswered questions, and were completely confused. Nevertheless, they stayed together and waited in the city as Jesus asked them to do.

It was then that the Holy Spirit came –  
– the power of God in a roaring wind that shook everything –  
– a divine fire that burned into their deepest selves – into their souls and spirits –  
And, instantly, they were changed!

Everything fell into place – They understood everything – Their doubts, fears, and uncertainties were transformed into faith, courage, and assurance. Furthermore, they were empowered to do all that God would ask of them from that time on. Some were even given extraordinary gifts and abilities!

I believe that God speaks to each of us in and through those personal experiences that touch us to the very core of our heart and soul. God is there in those marvelous manifestations of goodness and beauty. And just such an experience can influence our thinking, our attitude, and our behavior for the rest of our life. God is also there in those terrible things which impact us. He can help us to survive them – and show us a way forward for the future. But we must seek Him and His new plan for us, despite the tragedy or the trauma.

What might surprise us is that God does not limit wonderful experiences to those we consider good people, trying to live virtuous lives. Not at all! God is also generous with the worst of sinners. In fact, sometimes He seems to visit terrible sinners with special experiences – hoping to change them for the better – hoping they will become instruments for good in a broken world!

Fortunately, for everyone, God is patient. Most of us don't change instantaneously. Usually, our growth is gradual. Hopefully, we change as we see more, experience more, and understand more. Furthermore, while we might be impatient with others, the Holy Spirit is not. The Holy Spirit blesses everyone with the gifts we gradually develop for the benefit of others and for the world. This is what St. Paul is telling us in the second reading for today.

However, Paul goes on to remind us that as there is unity in the Godhead – there must also be unity in the Church – in the Christian Community. Male or female, rich or poor, Black, White, or Brown – we are all one in Christ. We all are created by God – We all are given gifts from God – And as Christians, we were all baptized in the Holy Spirit into the one body of the Risen Christ!

Brothers and Sisters, we all have been touched by grace – whether we know it or not. We are brothers and sisters to everyone in the world. Let us learn to appreciate the unique and special gifts that the Spirit has given to others, whoever they might be – And, let us pray that we will always use what we have been given for the glory of God – the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit!

Amen.

May 23, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra