

## St Pius & St Anthony Homily Pentecost Sunday Year C (2025) Luke

***You had to be there?*** We often hear that after someone goes through a powerful event or transformative experience (maybe it can't be expressed in words), and people say "*You had to be there.*" I say that at times, too, when I realize humbly that I am not going to be able to recreate the full effect of an event in my weak retelling of the story (*it just won't hit the same way*)! Kind of like when we hear an awesome joke--first, we encounter the issue of remembering it correctly, and then there is the challenge of telling it properly. How many times have we heard this – "Oh, I heard a great joke, but I can't remember it! (was it that great, then?) or they say, "You'll love this joke, but I'll probably mess it up" (let the closing punch slip early, or miss a critical detail) Okay, you had to be there?

Reminds me of a pastor who over breakfast one morning, said he had a perfect story he picked up from his hospital chaplain training years, that he couldn't wait to tell in a homily (then I couldn't wait to hear it!) But he wouldn't share it with me or the other pastor sitting with us, because he said he wanted to be the first to use it (God bless him, he moved on from the priesthood, so I don't know if he ever got to share it) My homiletics teacher in seminary called that a case of a *story in search of a homily*-always looking for the right fit! But aren't there, those situational jokes that require just the exact conditions, to get the best effect – here's an example. A guy and I are driving to Louisville to conduct a memorial service, and going up I-65 north, this huge bug hits the windshield and splatters. I look at him and say, "Oh, he'll never have the guts to do that again!" Now I had been holding that one a while. Once in a lifetime shot! Had to be there!

I bring all this up because Pentecost reveals what Jesus had indicated last week about solving the problem of location by first ascending to the heavenly glory and now descending again at Pentecost in Holy Spirit to be omnipresent to everyone everywhere. With Jesus now, it is never again a matter of 'having to be there', to Him, ***"there"*** is everywhere. This is what He meant in John 16:7, when He said, "I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go...." He comes to us all wherever we may be. He shares with us and calls us to share with each other, this new unifying language of the Spirit- the connective language of God, the peace-giving language of the heart, the concerned, compassionate language of love.

It is easy to get caught up in the dramatic scene of Pentecost. The earth shaking conditions of 1) strong driving wind-noise enough to stir up the surrounding neighborhood and draw people out to investigate the racket 2) the fire that appears like flags over each head of the Christians, directing attention to the Christians filled with the Spirit and then 3) comes this miracle of language – Peter's gospel pronouncement is a language that registers with everyone and they all understand, or that all out of Peter's mouth simultaneously comes every language but in the same channel, each person tuning in perfectly to their own

wavelength (*I ask, "Is the miracle in Peter's mouth, or in the listener's ear?-They are all touched!")* And if the miraculous is not realized in the real-time event itself, then it sure recorded in the result. (Acts 2:41 says that as a result of Peter's speaking this new language, some **3,000** were added to the Church that day-(*how may to start with? Acts 1:15 says about a previous gathering of the first Christians that 120 were there, so from this group of 12 apostles, 72 disciples, families and the women disciples=120, 3,000 are added, that is quite a multiplication of believers!*)

But what is the real significance of this ground-shaking event? Yes, the signs of fire, wind, noise and earthquaking, are dramatic, but that is only to draw people in, and not only draw people closer to each other as they listen in, come together, but it draws them in, into their own open space of the heart to hear what God is revealing. And it is a great multitude that is there. Why so many at that time? We may think of Pentecost as a completely Christian thing, but notice the word is already used there as a feast observed by the Hebrew folks (Acts 2:1) Pentecost was a Hebrew Holy Day-conclusion celebration of a Week (7) of Weeks after Passover, (49 days that brings them to this 50<sup>th</sup> day!) which gave them a chance to recall the re-assembly of Moses and the freed Israelites at the foot of Mt Sinai, after their clean breakaway journey from their Egyptian slavemasters. This 50<sup>th</sup> day after Passover, was a **re--collection** moment – a celebrating of where they'd come from and where they were going!! And this 50<sup>th</sup> day season coincide with the Spring harvest of the winter wheat harvest so they saw themselves as being gathered in or reaped by God together again (harvest of souls). God pulling in, amassing all peoples together again, bringing us all back into one family. (This is why people see Pentecost as the reunion of all that was scattered back with the Tower of Babel (*Genesis 11:1-9*) breakdown of the human family). And what happened at the foot of Mt Sinai but God SPOKE to them all, gave them the Law-ten commandments etc, this is the language part.

This is what I want to emphasize, the significance of Pentecost is the fact that God comes to us in Spirit anywhere-everywhere, and speaks to each of us in our hearts! And God speaks uniquely to each of us maybe (just what each of us unique children of God need to hear, at that moment- today's gospel brings that detail home- Jesus says 'Peace' 2x in the gospel to the apostles, because He knows that at that moment, that is what they most needed to hear from Him – **Peace**, after the traumatizing failure of theirs at His crucifixion. and Hearing God speak to our hearts draws us into hear one another too. If we listen with these same hearts, we can hear in each other that voice of God's spirit **calling us together.** Call it the Spirit's language, the language of love, God's language or the heart language of compassion-of feeling WITH others, but it draws us into better understanding others by placing ourselves alongside them, where we can truly

meet them, listen and hear them, accompanying them as Gd re-assembles us into His own whole people again.

Thanks be to God that Jesus knows how to speak right to my heart and yours and everyone's, God knows us, He speaks to us (*what might not be able to be put into words--maybe his words to me are a supra-linguistic medium, like a blue-tooth direct sync & pair to my soul*). But He speaks to our hearts what we need to hear, to bring us together. As we listen with our heart, His language, then He draws us in, together again.

John 10:3 *"the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."*

Jeremiah 31:33 *"I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts"*

Romans 8:26 *"the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings"*

Jeremiah 17:10 *"I, the LORD, explore the mind and test the heart, giving to all according to their ways"*

Jeremiah 32:29 *"I will give them one heart and one way"*

Mark 16:17 *"Jesus said, 'These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, **they will speak new languages.**'"*