

PENTECOST SUNDAY BE RENEWED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

! We celebrate the birthday of the Church today. When Jesus came He had followers, but it was on the day of Pentecost that those who believed and were baptized began to form a community.

It was a time that God brought all humankind together to speak one language and to understand each other. This was to nullify the confusion that occurred in Babel. This is what we just heard in the first reading, that people from all walks of life who had come to celebrate the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem could hear the apostles speaking in their own language. The Spirit had brought unity again.

The descent of the Holy Spirit on this day is also in fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, in which the Lord said, "I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old people shall dream dreams, and your young people see visions. Even on the slaves, men and women, shall I pour out my Spirit in those days," (Joel 3:1-2).

The Spirit of God has been the driving force behind all divine activities since creation. It started from Genesis; before the world was created, the Spirit of God like a mighty wind hovered over the waters, (Gen.1:1). In the Old Testament, leaders (prophets, priests, and kings) chosen by God to lead His people were all filled with the Spirit of God.

In the New Testament, leaders and those called to play a role in salvation of the world were also filled with the Holy Spirit; Zechariah, Elizabeth, John the Baptist, Mary, Jesus Himself, and then the disciples, and all of us.

Jesus promised His apostles that He would send the Helper to be with them and teach them the truth, the Advocate who would speak for us against the enemy who accuses us before the Lord (Rev. 12:10), and on Pentecost day that promise was fulfilled. This event changed the lives of the disciples, both men and women. From then on they could proclaim without fear that Jesus is Lord. From that day the eyes of their minds and hearts were opened and they had a full knowledge of God, and a strong love for His word.

They began to live a new life in the Spirit, had strong desire for prayer and closeness to the Lord; they understood all that they were taught by Christ and understood what salvation really means. They had a new outlook or perception about the world and what it offers. They received different gifts to offer different services and works to build the community. "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good". This is because the

believers form one body of Christ through baptism in the Spirit, no Jew or Greek, slave or free, all are one in Christ. The Spirit breaks down barriers. In a form of fire, the Spirit destroys the sin in us and strengthens us; as water, He refreshes, cleanses and gives us life; as dove, He brings us peace and purity of heart, and as wind, He blows wherever He wills.

There is no way we can be faithful followers of Christ without the help of the Holy Spirit; it happened to Samson (Jg. 16:20), and Saul, (1Sam.16:14); and it is clear in the lives of the apostles. Even when Jesus was with them they could not live true Christian lives as they did after Pentecost. Before the descent of the Spirit, they were cowards, timid, and their minds were on earthly kingship and worldly things; (Acts 1:6). Without the Spirit, we are like dry bones, (Ez. 37:1-14).

! We have been baptized and confirmed, and it means we have had our Pentecost experience; what has happened, and is happening in our lives. Did we receive any of the gifts of the Spirit? Yes. But how many of us know the charism or gift he or she has received, and how it is being used? Are we living a new life in the Spirit? What is it like?

The message or the warning from St. Paul is to help us assess ourselves to know whether we are living according to the Spirit or we are controlled by the flesh; “Brothers and sisters, live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other...Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, lust, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, faction, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God,” (Gal.5:16-22). It may seem scary but it is the truth.

Then he gives us the fruit of the Spirit which are, “love, joy, peace patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”. Have we crucified our flesh with its passion and desires, as St. Paul is saying?

Are we driven by the Spirit to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord of our lives, and that without Him we can do nothing? Are our bodies prepared enough for the Spirit to dwell in since we are the temple of the Holy Spirit? (1Cor. 6:19).