

2019 PENTECOST

Jesus had said to the Apostles: “When I have returned to the Father I shall ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever.”

And so the apostles and disciples gathered together and waited for the coming of the Advocate. For some there would have been fear. Would the next knock on the door be that of the Temple guards taking them off for execution?

But for some of them- especially Mary, there would have been a great hope. They had seen Jesus dead. They had seen Him risen. They sensed that they were spiritually dead. But that this would change with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would bring new life, new vibrancy, new vision.

And so it was. On the ninth day, a mighty wind shook the house and tongues of fire came to rest on them. In a twinkling the disciples were changed. The Spirit of Christ flooded through them. Fearlessly they unbolted the door entombing them and strode out into the packed streets of Jerusalem. It was the Feast of Weeks- the Jewish harvest festival- and the city was humming. They made their way to the Temple shouting out God’s praises in such an uncontrollable way that people wondered whether or not they were drunk. There were people from all over the world in the crowd; yet all understood what the disciples were saying. All people that day heard the Gospel proclaimed in their own native tongue.

The apostles and disciples were men and women afire; blazing with the radiant certainty that humanity had been redeemed through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. There was a terrible urgency within them to proclaim this News immediately; starting in Jerusalem and then reaching out to the furthest corners of the world. For they believed with all of their hearts that all people had a right to the Gospel; that all must be given the opportunity to hear and be encouraged to believe. They had the world to convert; there was no time to waste!

For the Church at its beginning, Pentecost was a resurrection. The Apostles had been spiritually dead. But through a mighty intervention from God, they had come alive.... sharing the one life of God. The Church had been born.

What does Pentecost mean for the Church?

I would suggest two things.

Jesus promised that, when the Holy Spirit came, the Church would be led into an ever-fuller understanding of God’s Truth. From the moment of Pentecost the Church has been Spirit-filled; endowed with Wisdom and Right Understanding and entrusted by God with the mission of guiding humanity into

a deeper and ever-deeper understanding of the Gospel. Throughout the centuries when difficult questions about God's truth have been asked, Church leaders have gathered into Great Councils to discern right teaching. In all of this they have been guided by the Holy Spirit, dwelling within them, protecting them from error.

The second important belief we have as a result of Pentecost is our knowledge that the Holy Spirit is a dynamic power within the Church prodding disciples to take risks for God. The Holy Spirit drives people to speak out against falsehood. It inspires some to give up everything to carry the Gospel to foreign lands. It inspires others to nurse the sick or to house the homeless. The Holy Spirit challenges all of us to be people of action, people of compassion; living out Jesus' Gospel of love.

Pope St John Paul II and Pope Benedict were great teaching Popes, protecting the Church from modern errors with mighty Encyclicals which were surely inspired by the Holy Spirit. Pope John XXIII and Pope Francis will be seen in history as being prophetic Popes, prodding the Church to actually live out the Gospel of Charity given to us by Jesus. All four Popes have been filled with the Holy Spirit. All have been gifts to the Church from God and their words are to be embraced with love.

When we were confirmed a Bishop laid hands over us calling upon the Holy Spirit to come upon us, bringing the sevenfold gifts of Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Right Judgment, Wonder, Reverence and Courage. These were serious gifts- gifts we need absolutely if we are to be full-blown Disciples of Christ and committed Catholics. These Gifts lead us into an ever-deeper understanding of God's Truth and give us courage to stand up for all that its true.

Some, who have a passion for evangelization, have asked for and received what are called Charismatic Gifts; gifts like speaking in tongues, speaking words of prophecy and gifts of healing.

On this Pentecost day let each and every one of us call upon the Holy Spirit to renew within us the Gifts first given to us at our Confirmations and to give us courage to use the charismatic gifts we have been blessed with. Please allow me to pray over you now praying for a new infilling of the Holy Spirit within you. Please stand and hold your arms outstretched in front of you. "Father of Light, send Your Spirit upon us with the power of a mighty wind. Open our horizons. Give us new courage, new wisdom, new ardour, new faith. Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on us."