

Pentecost

Year: B

Acts 2.1-11; Ps 103 (104); Gal 5.16-25; Jn 15.26-27; 16.12-15

Those Who Let the Light in

A group of tourists were visiting a huge cathedral. A little girl in the group stopped, in contemplative silence, to look at the beautiful huge stained-glass windows. The afternoon sun was shining brightly, bathing the group in a splendid symphony of gorgeous colors. After some time, as the group was about to leave, the little girl asked the guide, "Who are those persons in those beautiful windows?" The guide told her that they were the saints. That evening, as the little girl prepared for bed, she told her mom that she knew who the saints were. "Well, who are they?" her mother wanted to know. "Saints are persons who let the light shine through them!" was her innocent reply.

Using Our Brain

I am sure you have all heard people say that we use only 1% of our brains and that we could achieve so much more if we put our brains to better use. I think we could say the same about our reliance on the Holy Spirit. Maybe we rely only 1% on the Holy Spirit. The two examples of people praying in tongues led by the Holy Spirit are just a tiny glimpse of what could happen if the entire Church were vibrant with the Holy Spirit.

Farewell Speech

Jesus was going to leave them, but in his stead he would send the Spirit to enable them for the very thing he had prepared them for: to go out into the world and tell everyone the good news about what he had done for them. They were to carry on what Jesus had begun with them.... growing out from their personal and very special relationship with him was their mission to the whole world. So let's look at the effects the Spirit *did* have as they began their task.....

First of all the barriers of language were broken down. Strangers, foreigners, outsiders, a crowd of many different races and nationalities heard the disciples talking to them in their own language. And such was the conviction with which they spoke that many people trusted their good news and were baptized.

Secondly, their lives were changed. We read in Acts that the believers continued to live in close fellowship with each other. They shared their belongings and made sure distribution was equal according to need. They met regularly to worship and eat. Every day, more people joined them and barriers of class and nationality were broken down.

And **thirdly**, as a result of the Pentecost experience they were filled with a new power and confidence. Suddenly, ordinary people found they could do things they had never dreamed of. Miracles and wonders.

Pentecost Empowers Us

Pentecost is a never-ending story. It didn't happen just once. It happens whenever and wherever people live empowered by the Spirit of Jesus. But if it's not rooted in our own experience, then it is a flame that will soon die. We may speak in tongues, we may wish to live guided by the Spirit, we may seek community, but if the Spirit of the living God has not burned a path down into the depth of our experience, then Pentecost still awaits us.

Festival of Liberation

If Christmas is the festival of the Incarnation, and Easter is the festival of Resurrection, then Pentecost is the festival of liberation, because Pentecost is about freedom. It is about the Holy Spirit setting people free. Not the kind of freedom that means no more responsibility or suffering, nor freedom from having to make decisions, but a freedom to live in the truth of the promise that we are loved and we have been saved and we can live changed lives. It gives us a freedom to live the personal relationship with God that I was so proud of as a young Christian.

Spirit of True Freedom

Nothing is as precious as one's freedom. Dreams, aspirations and ideals are nothing if one does not have the freedom to pursue them.

A lot has been done in the name of freedom. A lot has been said and written about freedom.

In the past six months (2011 - May), the world witnessed Tunisian uprising, Egyptian revolution and Libyan civil war. Thousands of people fought for

freedom, hundreds of people lost their lives (for freedom), people are craving for freedom. But, what exactly is freedom? We are fighting for it, we are ready to die for it, we are craving for it, but, can we really define it?

Chance to be Better

Albert Camus thinks 'freedom is a chance to be better.' Abraham Lincoln calls it best hope of Earth. Epictetus says it's the right to live as we wish. For Moshe Dayan it's oxygen for soul. According to Urban Dictionary it's everything. And going by Oxford Dictionaries, it's power of self determination attributed to the will.

Views on Freedom

Everyone has different views about freedom. But somehow I am still not convinced because we can't really be fighting for a chance or hope. And the concept of everything is full of uncertainties. I don't think we are fighting for power of self-determination either. And as for the right to live as we wish, if we have the right to fight, then, how can we be denied the right to live as per our wish?

Then what is freedom?

For me, freedom has a deeper and greater meaning. I think freedom is much more than just a right, it's a responsibility of doing what you think is good, not only for you but even for society. It is a state when one realizes their duties and starts respecting others' freedom. The Spirit of Freedom can be obtained from the Spirit of God, who is Freedom.

Gist

All the readings for this feast of Pentecost focus our attention on the Holy Spirit – the gift of the Spirit; who the Spirit is and the work of the Spirit. The readings combine to impart one strong message, expressed by St. Paul – to live in the Spirit.

Tongues of Flames

The first reading describes the momentous giving of the Spirit at Pentecost. What is striking about this event is that the reception of the Spirit is described in terms of speaking and listening. On the one hand, it appears that the tongues of flames that hovered over the disciples and filled them with the Spirit of Jesus, granted them the ability to speak foreign languages. On the other hand, it is also possible that what happened is that all those who heard them were given the gift of understanding in their own language what was spoken to them.

Divine Communication

Either way, the miraculous gift of the Spirit at Pentecost involved the reality of communication. Something of the divine was being communicated to mere human beings. The fact that the crowd witnessing this event represented the known world around the Mediterranean basin at that time meant that the Easter event experienced by the disciples now was meant for the whole world, for all of our wounded and divided humanity.

New Creation

The very deliberate inclusion of sentences such as “evening of the same day that Jesus rose from the dead” and “the first day of the week” by the author indicates that this is a new creation, something entirely new breaking into the history of the world. I believe that this new creation is of greater importance and significance than the first creation of the universe, awesome as that is. How privileged we are to be part of this new creation.

The Advocate

The gospel for today takes us a little deeper into who the Spirit is. The Spirit is called an advocate. An advocate is someone who **pleads our cause**, who **presents our case**, who takes our side, **who defends us**, who **goes to bat for us**. But this is no ordinary advocate. This advocate is also God, the third person of the Holy Trinity. Jesus is clear that all that the Father possesses has been given to him, and that the Spirit takes what was given to him by the Father and gives it to us.

The Power of God

It is as if the Holy Spirit is a divine transmitter of the power of God which is far beyond our ability to absorb. We know from scripture that to see God face to face is impossible and would be far too overwhelming for us, much like we cannot gaze at the sun without protective eyewear. So God's love and gifts are made to measure for us by Jesus and his Spirit.

Spirit in Us

St. Paul, in the second reading, goes on to describe the work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in us, heals and purifies us, guides and transforms us. The Spirit helps us to finally let go of sin and sinfulness in our lives, as they are listed there. It is noteworthy for our sex-saturated society of today that the first two sins mentioned are fornication, which is genital sex outside of marriage, and impurity. The Spirit has much work to do in our society!

Allowing to fill Us with the Spirit

God does not just remove these negative things from our lives, however. The easiest and best way to get the air out of a glass is to fill it with water. And that is how the Father of Jesus Christ heals us. Jesus pours the gifts of the Spirit into us, filling us with those gifts and pushing out the negative reality of sin and sinfulness. And what beautiful gifts they are – peace, joy, and all the rest that are named.

Ultimately, what is happening is that we are being established within the reign of God here on earth. That is why St. Paul encourages us over and over again to live in the Spirit, to be guided by the Holy Spirit. It is a Spirit-driven way of life, the best of all lives.

The Eucharist

The Eucharist that we celebrate on this feast of Pentecost is itself a spirit-filled event. The Spirit speaks to us through the Word of God, shares with us God's forgiveness, and above all, transforms humble gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Allowing to be Transformed

That would be incomplete, however, if we do not let ourselves be transformed by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, sent out in the world to live in the Spirit and

to spread the Good News that the Spirit of the Risen Lord is waiting to transform all of reality into a new creation.

Practical Conclusions

Let us make efforts at discerning the Spirit in our daily life. **The Spirit of God is active and alive to those who tune their hearts to his inspirations and movements. As we tune our Radio, TV and cell phones to get the coverage, we need a similar approach to get the full coverage from the Holy Spirit so that we may be open to his grace and power.**