

Pentecost Sunday

First Reading: Acts 2:1-11
Psalm: 104 Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13
Gospel: John 15:26-27; 16:12-15

Sharing Jesus Christ. Happy Birthday! Today, we celebrate our birth as the Church. Our birth is made possible by the coming and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each of the faithful, so that we, who are members of the Body of Christ, also become the living stones that build up the Church.

To know the Holy Spirit is to know the Church. And so today, on the Solemnity of the Pentecost, we ask the question, “*Who is the Holy Spirit?*” In doing so, I hope that the answers we receive from the readings will deepen our appreciation for who we are as the Church.

Discovering Jesus Christ. First, from the Gospel, we learn that the Holy Spirit is the exemplary teacher on community and unity. Let me ask you, “*Is the Holy Spirit the same as the Father and the Son?*” No, they are One God yet there is clear distinction among the three Persons! Here, we only have to cite the words of Jesus in his great commission, “*Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...*” Another question, “*Can the Holy Spirit be divided from the Father and the Son?*” (Matthew 28:19) No. In fact, there are instances in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit is referred to as, “*the Spirit of the Father*” (Matthew 10:20) and as “*the Spirit of Christ*” (Roman 8:9, 1 Peter 1:11) to point us to that indivisible unity among the three Persons of the Trinity.

So what? A lesson from history, in the eleventh century, when a monk, Joachim de Fiore proposed that in history, there are three ages: the age of the Father, which corresponds to the Old Testament, the age of the Son, which corresponds to the New Testament, and the age of the Holy Spirit, which corresponds to the time of the Church.

Later, his teachings were applied to the extreme: the Father and the Son were discarded in favor of the Holy Spirit, also the Old and the New Testaments were rendered useless, favoring new teachings that are “*free from the letter of the Scriptures.*” Thankfully, Saint Thomas Aquinas confuted these false teachings, and, eventually, the Fourth Lateran Council and Pope Alexander V condemned these extreme interpretations. Now, a thousand years later, variations of these false teachings still gain some adherents who make such claims, “*I believe in God but I do not believe in Jesus!*” or “*I believe in Jesus, but I do not want to have anything to do with the Church!*” or “*I listen to the Word of God but I do not pay attention to the teachings of the Church!*” Living in a time when the Bible and the Catechism are so accessible to us, given the gifts of wisdom, knowledge and understanding, and standing on two thousand year of intellectual tradition, each of us is truly equipped to think critically. For a Christian, there really is no excuse for stupidity. Think outside the box? Yes, but think with the mind of God in His Church.

Second, from the Second Reading, we learn that the Holy Spirit is our exemplary teacher on the work of God and how we participate in it. *There are many gifts, but one Spirit. There are many forms of service, but one Lord. There are many workings, but one God. And the use of these gifts, of service and of work is intended to benefit all.*

Implications. In any Christian community, therefore, there must not be room for envy nor must there be room for laziness. Why? Because in simple terms, envy is the failure to recognize my own God-given gifts, and laziness is the failure for me to put these gifts to use. It is my hope that every year a ministry fair is held in the parish just to help everyone to recognize and to appreciate their God-given gifts, and how to put these gifts to concrete use by serving God and neighbor. Every year, more parishioners must get involved. Every year, according to perceived needs, there must be room for new ministries. But in order to do this, we must put to use the gifts of right judgment and courage so as to discern and to act accordingly.

And third, from the First Reading, we learn that the Holy Spirit is our exemplary teacher on mission, mission whose nature is not provincial but rather universal. Through the Spirit, disciples were able to speak the language of Galileans, Parthians, Medes,

Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judeans, Cappadocians, Pontians and Asians, Phrygians and Pamphylans, Egyptians, Libyans and Cyrenians, Cretans and Arabs in order to give witness to the works of God before the world.

Now, as far as I know, Wolcott, Red Creek and Fair Haven speak the same language, right? In addition, we need to speak the spiritual language of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, modesty, goodness and chastity – fruits of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, nothing should keep us from working together in advancing the mission of Jesus Christ. In sports, you might see each other as rivals, but in faith, we are brothers and sisters.

Thankfully, the Spirit is continually at work in our midst, sending us blessings. It is a blessing that our finance director is from Ontario and our new religious education coordinator is from Sodus, and that Mary and Corey are shared with two other neighboring parishes. It is a blessing that a new member of the pastoral council is from Sodus. It is a blessing that a catechist for the junior high youth group next year is from Williamson. It is a blessing that a new member of the Stewardship Committee comes from Rochester. With the Holy Spirit, our new staff members and new parish volunteers remind us that the mission entrusted to us by Jesus touches other people and must reach other people beyond our three small villages. The love of God is this expansive – it cannot be limited nor contained. With the gifts of awe and wonder (fear of the Lord), and piety, may we always be mindful of our God, the God who cares not only for the particulars but also for the universal.

Following Jesus Christ. Today, as we commemorate the sending of the Holy Spirit to us by the Father and the Son, may we truly and sincerely welcome its indwelling in each of us. And so together, we pray:

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful,
and kindle in us the fire of your love.*

V. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created.

R. And you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.