



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

## **Pentecost Sunday Year C**

### ***They were filled with the Holy Spirit***

*Readings: Acts 2:1-11, Ps 103, Romans 8:8-17, John 14:15-16, 23-26*

Happy Birthday to you,

Happy Birthday to you

Happy Birthday dear Catholic Church

Happy Birthday to you.

One thousand nine hundred and eighty years old today.

The Feast of Pentecost marks the fiftieth day after Easter in the Christian Calendar. But it did not start as a Christian Festival. Its history is deep in its Jewish past and is known variously as the Feast of Weeks or Shavuot. It was a harvest festival when the first fruits of the ground would be offered to the One who gave it to us, God Himself.

It marks the seven weeks of seven days – seven being the mystical number of completeness.

But its origins are deeper still. For the Hebrew the feast goes back to the moment on Sinai when, in majesty and awe, the Lord gave Moses those stone tablets which would be the fountainhead of the Law by which the

people of God would be guided thereafter and which would delineate them from their polytheistic pagan neighbours.

In short, it has history.

God does nothing by accident or inadvertence.

Just as He gave the Passover to His people for freedom and salvation, so in Christ, the Word of God made flesh, He has instituted the final and eternal Passover in the Body and Blood of Christ.

Just as the Holy Spirit of God led the Hebrews to Sinai where Moses received the definitive guidance for the people, so the Holy Spirit of God descends on the Apostles and the Church creating a community henceforth inspired and led into all truth by His power and wisdom.

The promise to the prophets that God would reside in His people is now fulfilled. The promise of the direct involvement of the Holy Spirit of God gives us Scripture, Sacraments and assurance of Church teaching and the Holy Tradition that underpins it.

When the Disciples gather in the upper room with the Apostles, they are being obedient to Jesus.

What is unleashed on them is no less than the power of God for the ministry of the Church to become the Body of Christ on earth.

When that mighty rushing wind pours from heaven, through that house where they are sitting, it is no less than the animating breath of God.

When that fire, commemorated thereafter in the odd shaped bishop's hat, sits on their heads it is the power, energy, light, purifying glory of God enabling His servants.

St. Luke records simply,  
'They were filled with the Holy Spirit.'

That sentence defines the Church.

But notice the immediate effect. The Holy Spirit does not cosset the disciples in a holy and comfortable reverie of personal spirituality. The Holy Spirit of God drives us out into the mission field to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations.

Tumbling out of the house onto the streets of Jerusalem, the Apostles (the 'sent' men), proclaim the revelation of God in Christ to all the known world, represented by the multitude of Jews on pilgrimage from the four corners of the earth.

For most readers in church, being awarded today's first reading is like being asked to ride the Grand National on a rocking horse, with all those peculiar and difficult names. (Cappadocia, Phrygia, Pamphilia etc.)  
Why do they matter?

If you get out an ancient atlas (or Google one), you will discover that this long list of tongue twisters takes us from the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea through a long arc across the northern borders of Persia, through Iraq, Arabia, northern Africa. Moving the other way through all

the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire (now Turkey and Greece) through the islands and to the very capital itself.

In other words, the Holy Spirit is immediately preaching the Gospel to representatives of the whole of the known world.

The very first sign on the very first day is that the Church is truly Catholic.

And, in the years to come, as the Apostles and disciples fan out to all these distant places and near, there will be those who witnessed this miracle on the streets of Jerusalem on this first day and gone home to tell the story to their local communities. That story will later be confirmed by the mission of the Church.

As we celebrate the birthday of the miracle of the Church let us pledge ourselves anew, the next generation of disciples, to go out from here and confirm the Gospel of the Risen Christ to those who have heard the rumour but not understood its implications for them and for all mankind.

Saint Peter pray for us.

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