



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Pentecost Sunday - Year B

Together together

Readings: Acts 2: 1-11, Ps 103, Galatians 5: 16-25, John 15: 26-27; 16: 12-15

The Feast of Pentecost, which we celebrate today, recalls the day on which the Holy Spirit of God fired up the Apostles and sent them out into the world on the universal mission of the Church.

The choice of this festival for this particular demonstration of the power of God is no accident. Pentecost is simply the Greek name for the ancient Jewish Feast of Weeks or Shavuot. This celebration comes fifty days after Passover and recalls the gift of the Law by God on Mount Sinai to Moses. Passover is the day when the Hebrew people were freed from tyranny and slavery in Egypt and the Angel of Death and begin their journey to the Promised Land. The giving of the Law is the day they sign up as the People of God and begin that sacred task of bringing the knowledge of the one true God to the world.

So it is no accident that Jesus Christ is sacrificed at Passover. The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, is offered on Calvary to turn

away the Angel of Death and launch all who are in His Body on their journey to the Promised Land.

The Pentecost, the fifty days after, sees the gift not of the law but of no less than the Holy Spirit of God who, the prophets have foretold, will one day write the law of God on the hearts of the faithful. The Holy Spirit will be the mark of the faithful and will be God's sign of claiming them for His own and send them into the world to proclaim the one true God and the Way of Salvation.

St. Luke gives us a vivid description of the events of the day.

But there is a little peculiarity which, in the English, goes unnoticed. The English script says that they were all together. The Greek script tells us that they were all together - together. That is to emphasise that, not only were the Apostolic band all in the same geographical location but they were, as one of the older translations has it, 'of one accord', one mind, one heart. They were waiting on God. This is a prerequisite of the outpouring of the Spirit and the evangelical work of the Church:

TOGETHER --- TOGETHER

But then in that upper room the four elements of created order come **together**. The little houses of clay, created by God, washed in the waters of the baptism of repentance, are suddenly infused with the unseen mover, the breath of God, the mighty rushing wind of the Spirit, the life-giver and then crowned with the energising, purifying, sanctifying fire of God's love and power.

So Pentecost looks back to the original marking out of God's people and then forward to the mission of the Universal Church. The Law that leads the faithful in the way of God now becomes infused by the Holy Spirit within the soul of man by the mystery of the sacramental life.

Just what a step change takes place is indicated in, amongst many other places, the writings of St. Basil the Great. He writes, in the Office of Readings for this week, thus: 'Souls in whom the Spirit shines become spiritual themselves and a source of grace for others. The Spirit gives us foreknowledge of the future, understanding of the mysteries of faith, insight into the hidden meaning of Scripture. Through the Spirit we become citizens of Heaven, we enter eternal happiness, we abide in God.'

This is the promise held out to us in the sacraments. We receive the Body of Christ. We become part of the Body of Christ. This is the same Christ crucified who is Risen, Ascended and Glorified. This the Christ, Jesus, who is both God and Man and whose divinity translates our humanity into eternity.

So St. Basil concludes, since we are in the God-Man Christ who is presented to us in the Sacraments by the Holy Spirit, the divine life of God, 'Through the Spirit we acquire a likeness to God.' We become like Jesus. That is the meaning of 'Christening'. Then he concludes with this stunning sentence: 'Through the Spirit we attain what is beyond our most sublime aspirations – we become God.'

That is what is working within us at the Mass. It is what St. Athanasius describes as 'the divinisation of Man' – it is the key to living in eternity in the All Holy Presence of the Father.

Only as sons and daughters, purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit both here and in the purgatory, can we be in Christ and share in His life that is divine and eternal. That message is the Gospel of hope that the Church holds out to all mankind.

The road to eternity begins in the Spiritual fire of the Pentecost and leads, via the sacramental life faithfully lived, to Heaven.

Our task is, like the Apostles, on fire with the love of God, is to pour into the streets of our towns and to speak to all who will listen, in language that they understand, 'the mighty works of God' and invite them on this journey into the heart of God.

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