

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Solemnity of Pentecost—Year B

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Pentecost Sunday - Mass during the Day

Reading 1

Acts 2:1-11

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled,
they were all in one place together.
And suddenly there came from the sky
a noise like a strong driving wind,
and it filled the entire house in which they were.
Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
which parted and came to rest on each one of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in different tongues,
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem.
At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd,
but they were confused
because each one heard them speaking in his own language.
They were astounded, and in amazement they asked,
"Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?
Then how does each of us hear them in his native language?
We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites,
inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,
Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,
Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene,
as well as travelers from Rome,
both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs,
yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues
of the mighty acts of God."

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

R. (cf. 30) **Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.**
Bless the LORD, O my soul!
O LORD, my God, you are great indeed!
How manifold are your works, O LORD!
the earth is full of your creatures;
R. **Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.**

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD be glad in his works!
Pleasing to him be my theme;
I will be glad in the LORD.
R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

If you take away their breath, they perish
and return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth.
R. Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

Reading 2

1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

Brothers and sisters:
No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit;
there are different forms of service but the same Lord;
there are different workings but the same God
who produces all of them in everyone.
To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit
is given for some benefit.

As a body is one though it has many parts,
and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body,
so also Christ.
For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,
whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons,
and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.

Or

Galatians 5:16-25

Brothers and sisters, live by the Spirit
and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh.
For the flesh has desires against the Spirit,
and the Spirit against the flesh;
these are opposed to each other,
so that you may not do what you want.
But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
Now the works of the flesh are obvious:
immorality, impurity, lust, idolatry,
sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy,
outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness,
dissensions, factions, occasions of envy,
drinking bouts, orgies, and the like.
I warn you, as I warned you before,

that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, generosity,
faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
Against such there is no law.
Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh
with its passions and desires.
If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.

Alleluia

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel

John 20:19-23

On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,
for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said to them, "Peace be with you."
When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.
Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I send you."
And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
"Receive the Holy Spirit.
Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them,
and whose sins you retain are retained."

John 15:26-27; 16:12-15

Jesus said to his disciples:
"When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father,
he will testify to me.
And you also testify,
because you have been with me from the beginning.

"I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.
But when he comes, the Spirit of truth,
he will guide you to all truth.
He will not speak on his own,
but he will speak what he hears,
and will declare to you the things that are coming.
He will glorify me,
because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.
Everything that the Father has is mine;
for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine
and declare it to you."

Exegesis

Acts 2:1-11

Pentecost was one of the three pilgrim feasts that required the adult men of Israel to travel to Jerusalem (Deut 16:16). It was a harvest festival celebrated 50 days after Passover, when the first loaves of bread from the spring wheat crop were dedicated as a firstfruits offering to the Lord (Lev 23:15-17). Over time, theological significance was added to its agricultural focus: Pentecost became a celebration of the Torah given to Israel on Mount Sinai, with lectionary readings taken from Exodus 19-20. For Christians, Pentecost celebrates the new law of the Spirit (Rom 8:2), written on the hearts of believers (Jer 31:31-34; 2 Cor 3:4-6), which surpasses the Law of Moses, inscribed on stone tablets (Ex 31:18).¹

The wind and the fire of the Pentecost event certainly call to mind the great theophany of God on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:16-19). Reference to God as the Mighty Wind is introduced in the second verse of the bible, Genesis 1:2, “the earth was a formless wasteland while a mighty wind (*Ruah*) swept over the waters.” *Ruah* is one of the names for God in the OT, i.e. Holy Spirit. The image of God as fire appears first in the burning bush when God reveals Himself to Moses as the one whose nature it is to be, i.e. being itself. In that revelation God makes Himself visible in the fire of the burning bush. It is thus fitting that God makes Himself visible at Pentecost in wind and fire.

The miracle of Pentecost is anticipated by isolated instances in Luke (Lk 1:15, 35, 41, 67), and its effects are noted several times in Acts (4:8, 31: 9:17, 13:9). The Spirit is the founding gift of the New Covenant and the soul that animated the Christian community (1 Cor 12:12-13). He directs the missionary efforts of the Church (Acts 1:8, 13:2), guides her leadership into truth (Jn 16:13), and sanctifies her life through the Sacraments (Acts 2:38; 8:17; Jn 20:22-23).²

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

Psalm 104 is a hymn of praise to Yahweh as creator and sustainer of life. “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” The word *soul* has an interesting etymology as it evolves through Sacred Scripture. The Hebrew word is *nepes*. It is used in different contexts to describe the following: throat, neck, breath, living being, person, personality, life and eventually the modern day understanding of soul. *Nepes* is translated into Greek as *psyche* (zoo kay), and into English as *soul*. In the creation story of Genesis, “The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.” (Gen 2:7) With the evolution of the word *nepes* the soul is seen as the receptor or the receiver of the life breath of God. In the creation story the life breath of God, i.e. the Holy Spirit is blown into the nostrils, into the throat and neck of the person, into his being. The Hebrew word for life as used in the creation story is *hay yim* which is used both to describe biological life as well as eternal life (Mal 2:5). The word *psyche* as developed in Greek Philosophy was also used to describe the receptor of or the seat of life, the dwelling place of the spirit of the person, in the flesh/spirit dichotomy. The soul, the receptor of the Holy Spirit is of particular significance as we celebrate the Pentecost event. Using an analogy from modern electronics God is the transmitter of His Holy Spirit and the soul is the receiver. God is always transmitting.

1. The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, The New Testament, S.F., Page 209, F.N. 2:1.

2. The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, The New Testament, S.F., Page 209, F.N. 2:4.

Exegesis (Continued)

1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

Someone once asked me, “How is the Holy Spirit that we experience now and the Holy Spirit as seen in Acts, different from the Holy Spirit revealed in the Old Testament?” The answer of course is it is the same Spirit, as God is one, immutable, without change. Perhaps the answer is that we are different, ontologically changed by the Paschal Mystery, and baptized into Christ Jesus. It is the same Spirit that hovered over the waters at creation, the same Spirit that anointed the prophets, the same Spirit that overshadowed Mary, the same Spirit that fell upon and remained with Jesus at His baptism, the same Spirit that He surrendered from the Cross, the same Spirit that raised Him from the dead, the same Spirit that He breathed upon the disciples that first Easter Sunday evening, the same Spirit poured upon the Church at Pentecost, and the same Spirit that is poured out on our Altar at Mass and in the sacraments that we receive. It is the same Spirit that dwells in our souls, in which we live and move and have our being. Sharing in the one Spirit makes us one with God and with each other. When enter that love chain we connect to the source of all that is and so we are united with God and with all of creation that shares in that same Spirit.

At the Last Supper Jesus promised the gift of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. He promised the gift of His indwelling presence, the future Spirit of the Risen Lord. He described the many gifts that that Spirit would bring. In the end He prayed, “Father may they be one as You and I are One.” The Holy Spirit is the bond of love that makes the Father and the Son One. Jesus is inviting us into this bond of love.

In his *Treatise Against Heresies* St. Irenaeus describes this gift of oneness as follows: “This is why the Lord promised to send the Advocate: He was to prepare us as an offering to God. Like dry flour, which cannot become one lump of dough, one loaf of bread, without moisture, we who are many could not become one in Christ Jesus without the water that comes down from heaven. And like parched ground, which yields no harvest unless it receives moisture, we who were once like a waterless tree could never have lived and borne fruit without this abundant rainfall from above. Through the baptism that liberates us from change and decay we have become one in body; through the Spirit we have become one in soul.”³

John 20:19-23

There are two words in today’s Gospel that don’t translate well into English. The first is the word *peace* and the second is the word *send* or *sent*. Jesus talked about a peace that only He could give and not as the world gives. The underlying word in Hebrew/Aramaic is *shalom*. The Jewish understanding of this peace is precisely that it comes from God, God is the source of this peace. Peace is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, i.e. Love, Joy, Peace, etc. As the serenity prayer states, it does not promise freedom from the storms of life, but peace amid the storms. For me it is an anchor point in this fast pace and turbulent world.

The idea of being sent by someone in the ancient world had a much deeper connotation than we often think of. To send someone was to give them whatever authority that the sender had to give. It might be likened to a modern-day power of attorney. If a king sent one of his subjects to perform some tasks or enter some contract, he would carry with him the full authority of the king. So, when Jesus sent out His apostles, He gave them His power and authority, the power and authority given Him by His Father. Recall their amazement when the apostles returned from their first missionary assignment. Peter’s bold sermon after the Pentecost experience is certainly evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit that now overshadows him. The transformation that takes place in all the disciples following Pentecost further attests to the power of the Holy Spirit at work in them and in the Church. As priests and deacons, and as lay faithful working in the Church we can attest to those gifts in ministry.

3. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Lib. 3, 17, 1-3L SC 34, 302-306.

Reflection

Every day I thank God for the gift of His Holy Spirit. I owe every second of the 25 years of my priesthood to the Holy Spirit. I could do nothing without the Holy Spirit. I feel especially blessed with experiencing strong Spirit filled parish communities over my years as a pastor. I feel that I have received more than I have given to each of the communities that I served. What I have received more of is the Holy Spirit.

It is through day-to-day experiences that we can sense and feel and see the Holy Spirit. It is in prayer that I can see the movement of the Holy Spirit in communities of faith. As we can see the wind in the movement of the trees, I can see the Holy Spirit in the movement and in the life of the Church. We are truly blessed to have the vibrancy of the Holy Spirit with and among us. It is a gift from God. It is in fact the gift of God. The Holy Spirit is God quite literally sharing His life with us. The great Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, once said that the Holy Spirit is “the whirl of love between the Father and the Son that cannot be contained but bursts out into all of creation.” The Holy Spirit is both the bond of love that makes the Father and Son one, and the pouring out of God’s love into all of creation.

In the beginning the mighty Spirit (*Ruah*) hovered over the waters and transformed the primordial chaos into the beauty of creation. God then formed man out of the clay of the earth and breathed His Spirit into his nostrils and man became a living being. The Spirit rushed upon a young shepherd boy named David and he became the great anointed king that he was. God promised to breathe His Spirit back into the field of dry human bones that had cut themselves off from God that they may once again become living beings. When the time was right God sent His Holy Spirit into a young peasant girl in Palestine and she would give birth by the power of that Spirit to a man who we call the Son of God and the Son of Mary. The heavens opened as Jesus came out of the waters of the Jordan River and the Spirit was seen coming in the form of a dove upon Him. From the cross Jesus surrendered that Spirit back to the Father. On Sunday morning that Spirit was breathed back into the lifeless body of Jesus and He was raised from the dead. That evening the Risen Lord walked through the locked doors of the upper room and breathed that same Spirit upon the apostles. Fifty days later that same Spirit was poured out upon the Church at Pentecost. This weekend that same Spirit will pour out upon our gifts of bread and wine, and they will become the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. God’s love will be poured out into us who believe!

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen

Yours in Christ,



Personal Witness

Since childhood I have had a deep personal relationship with Jesus. Since the day of my First Communion, I have experienced His real and substantial presence in the Eucharist. In my mind's eye I envision Him as portrayed in art as the Good Shepherd holding a lamb in His arms. I have always spoken to and listened to Jesus in my silent prayer. There were times in my life where I have strayed and neglected this relationship, but I now know that He was always holding me in His arms, always seeking me out when I strayed. He has always remained faithful and my relationship with Jesus has never been stronger than it is at this moment in my life.

During my seminary years I developed for the first time a relationship with God the Father. It came while meditating on the story of *The Prodigal Son*. In the Blessed Sacrament Chapel at the seminary there was a large print of Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal Son*. My vision of God the Father now indelibly sketched in my mind is that of Rembrandt's rendition. I am the prodigal son in His embrace.

It was not until my ordination 25 years ago that I began to have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is more difficult to envision. How does one see the wind? As one sees the wind in the movement of trees and the rustle of leaves, I see and feel the Holy Spirit now in my life in a very personal way. At the center of the ordination liturgy is the *Invocation of the Holy Spirit* as the candidate lies prostrate in front of the altar. From that moment on I have felt the Holy Spirit in a rather profound way leading and guiding my life and ministry.

Two or three years into my priesthood I was experiencing a bit of discouragement. I see now how I had drifted from the Holy Spirit. I was thinking that it was me that was doing all the work and things were not progressing as well as I had hoped. One day on my day off, a Monday, I was feeling particularly dejected about how the weekend had gone. As usual on my day off I was out on a nature hike. That day I was on a trail that followed the southern shore of Lake Superior in the central Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I was west of Grand Marais at a point where the trail rises some 500 feet above the lake with a nearly straight vertical descent. I found myself eye level with a beautiful bald eagle soaring in the wind currents. As I watched I noticed that she was circling a smaller bird that I at first assumed was her prey. The bird was flapping its wings frantically trying to stay airborne. I then thought that maybe it was wounded as it flew so erratically. As I watched further through my binoculars, I discovered that it was a young eaglet that was just leaning to fly. It had not yet learned to utilize the wind currents as the mother had. There was the mother gliding effortlessly with the wind beneath her wings and the baby was flapping her wings frantically trying to stay afloat.

Now with lifted spirits I continued my hike. As my thoughts turned back to prayer and my discouragements, I realized that I was like the young eaglet, that I was flapping my wings to stay afloat. I was not utilizing the Holy Spirit as the wind beneath my wings. From that moment on I started to rely more on the Holy Spirit and less on my own efforts, and my ministry and my life would be changed forever. I spent more time in prayer asking for the enlightenment and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I started praying the Holy Spirit prayer before and after every homily.

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love.
Amen.

