

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 C

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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.

Alternate Reading 2: Romans 8: 8-17

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."

or:

John 14:15-16, 23b-26

Jesus said to his disciples:
"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
And I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always.

"Whoever loves me will keep my word,
and my Father will love him,
and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.
Those who do not love me do not keep my words;
yet the word you hear is not mine
but that of the Father who sent me.

"I have told you this while I am with you.
The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name,
will teach you everything
and remind you of all that I told 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 gift of Pentecost is the fulfillment of the promise that Jesus made to His apostles: “And behold I am sending the promise of the Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with the power from on high.” (Lk 24: 49). The image of the Holy Spirit clothing, enveloping and overshadowing is prominent in Sacred Scripture. In *First Chronicles* enveloped or clothed Amasai such that he could speak with authority. “Then the Spirit enveloped (*labash*) Amasai, the chief of the Thirty, who spoke: ‘We are yours, O David, we are with you, O son of Jesse. Peace, peace to you, and peace to him who helps you; your God it is who helps you.’” (1 Chr 12: 18). In the Annunciation narrative the Holy Spirit enveloped or overshadowed Mary. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” (Lk 1:35).

It was common for a prophet to pass portion of the Spirit to his successor. “When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask for whatever I may do for you, before I am taken from you.’ Elisha answered, ‘May I receive a double portion of your Spirit’” (2 Kgs 2: 9).

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

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)

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

Psalm 104 consists of 35 verses and is titled *Praise of God the Creator*. Psalm 104 is a hymn of praise to Yahweh as creator and sustainer of life. Verses omitted from our pericope today utilize the images of wind and fire appropriate for today's feast. "You (Yahweh) make the clouds your chariot; you travel on the wings of the wind. You make the winds your messengers; flaming fire, your ministers." (Ps 104: 3-4).

The verse that introduces and concludes Psalm 104 is "Bless the Lord, O my soul." The Hebrew word that is translated as *bless* is *baruch*. God has no need of blessing from us. *Baruch* has more of a connotation of giving praise or bowing or kneeling down in reverence.

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 (*nepes*)." (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 *hayim* 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 receptor and the dwelling place of the spirit in 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.

May the glory of the Lord endure forever. The Hebrew word that is translated here as *glory* is *kabod*. The word connotes a manifestation of power especially in a display of divine power. It suggests placing ourselves before our creator with a feeling of overwhelming humility and reverence.

Lord, send out Your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth. The Hebrew word translated as *Spirit* is *Ruah*. This verse refers to the creation story of *Genesis*, where the *Ruah* or *Mighty Wind* moved over the waters of chaos and changed them into the beauty of creation. Once again, the Psalmist is calling on Yahweh to renew and transform the face of the earth with His Holy Spirit.

Exegesis (Continued)

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

At the time that Paul penned this letter he was experiencing an unhealthy competitiveness among the members of the Church at Corinth that was causing discord. It involved the various manifestations of the Spirit among the people. Paul seeks to remind them that they are all “drinking” from the same fountain of God’s Spirit.

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 we enter that chain of love 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

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

Exegesis (Continued)

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 Greek word translated here for *peace* is *eirene*. 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 word that is translated as *sent* is *apostello* in the original Greek. Obviously, we get the word *apostle* from this Greek word. 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.

"As the Father has sent me, so I send you." These words of Jesus further attest to the continuation of the mission of Jesus here on earth in and through His apostles and His Church. It is not a new mission that we engage upon but a continuation of the mission of Jesus sent by the Father, filled, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. I think it was St. Augustine who once said that the OT is the Gospel of God the Father, the Gospels are the Good News of Jesus, the *Acts of the Apostles* and the Church are the Good News of the Holy Spirit; and that Gospel is still being written in and through us.

He breathed on them. This expression (*enephusesen*) appears three times in the LXX OT; Gen 2: 7, Ezek 37: 9-10, and Wis 15: 11. "The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the earth and breathed (*enephusesen*) into his nostrils the breath of life." (Gen 2: 7). "Thus says the Lord God: From the four winds come, O Spirit, and breathe (*enephusesen*) into these slain that they may come to life." (Ezek 37: 9-10). Speaking of one without wisdom... "Because he knew not the one who fashioned him, and breathed (*enephusesen*) into him a quickening soul, and infused a vital Spirit." (Wis 15: 11). In all references it is the breath of life, the life breath of God, the Holy Spirit, that is shared with humanity, so that in the words of St. Paul, "we may live and move and have our being." (Acts 17: 28). In that same speech at the Areopagus St. Paul said, "Rather it is He who gives to everyone life and breath and everything." (Acts 17: 25).

"Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." Speaking of the gift of the Holy Spirit during the Last Supper Jesus said: "And when He (the Holy Spirit) comes He will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation." The light of Holy Spirit will lie bear all things. Jesus proclaimed to the world that the Son of Man had the power to forgive sins. Now He is passing that power to the apostles, that He may forgive sins in and through them in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The concept of binding/loosing, opening/closing flows from the prophecy of Isaiah: "I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; when he opens, no one shall shut, when he shuts, no one shall open." (Is 22: 22). The mission of Jesus continues in and through His Body here on earth, His Church.

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Glenn".

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 26 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. Since then, I have profoundly felt the Holy Spirit guiding my life and ministry.

Two or three years into my priesthood I was experiencing a bit of discouragement. I see now how I drifted from the Holy Spirit. I was thinking that it was me that was doing all the work and now 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 flopping 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 learning 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.

