

Chaplain's Bulletin May 28, 2023



Dear Folks,

This is Pentecost! Along with Easter and Christmas, it is one of the three biggest days of the year, but is often neglected. It is the great feast of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the Catholic Church. If Pentecost was in A.D. 33, as many scholars believe it is, then this is the 1990th birthday of the Church (we should be planning for a really big monster of a party in ten years, when it turns 2000. I've suggested to some of our school kids that an interesting math problem would be: how much cake do you need to hold all those candles?).

We start with Genesis 11:1-11, the story of the Tower of Babel. It is a story of sin dividing people with confused language as they try to attain heaven on their terms rather than receiving the gifts that God wants to give them. Acts 2:1-11 is the story of Pentecost, which is God undoing the effects of Babel, enabling people of different languages to understand each other. The Holy Spirit communicates the fruit of the Pascal Mystery that undoes the power of sin. He also formed the disciples into the Church. Without losing our individuality, we become parts of one another, as parts of a body (1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12) and become more fully alive, as we have no trouble seeing ourselves as a higher form of life than amebae (and see John 10:10).

In the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of living water (John 4:4-16 and 7:37-39), and it is explained that this refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit, who would only be sent after Jesus was glorified. This image is brought to fullness in Revelation 21:1-2, in which we see the Trinity together: God (the Father) and the Lamb (Jesus) are on the throne, and from the throne flows life-giving water (the Holy Spirit).

The Holy Spirit saves us from "the works of the flesh." "In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23a, but it's worthwhile reading vv. 16-26). Jesus said, "By their fruits you will know them (Matt 7:16)." I don't know about farming, but I figure the measure of success for a farmer is less about how much he sweats, and more about what crops are produced. If we want some sense if we are growing as disciples, are we growing in these qualities? What signs are there in our behavior that we are showing fruit? Many judge a worship service by how the "experience" made them "feel." Better questions might be, "Did it help me focus on God rather than myself?" and "Afterwards, did I exhibit more fruit of the Holy Spirit in my behavior?" Obviously, this is not just the work of the worship leaders, but also how the individuals give themselves to participate, both internally and externally. A useful thing to do would be to review the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and ask ourselves, "what behaviors are we growing in that show the Spirit bearing fruit?" Another good thing to do is pray for the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

This is Pentecost! Let us Celebrate!

Blessings,

Fr Jim