

Pentecost Sunday: May 23, 2010



Theme: As the Father sent me, so I send you.

Reading I: Acts: 2, 1-11, Author: Luke, the Physician Date: ~ early 60s BCE

Background: Pentecost occurred historically at fifty days after Passover. Judaism transformed it into a feast of salvation history celebrating the giving of the Law at Sinai and the establishment of Israel as God's people. and then was celebrated in a new evangelization at fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. In Old Testament times, it was a celebration of the ingathering of the grain harvest. Jews from around the world gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate. All these associations were carried over into the Christian feast that marked the conclusion of the great fifty days. The grain harvest and the Law are replaced by the gift of the Spirit, and the constitution of the old Israelis replaced by the constitution of the new. The feast of the Law becomes the feast of the Spirit.

Theme: They were on fire with the Holy Spirit.

Question: o How does Jesus commission you to spread the word?

Reading II: Romans 8: 8-17, Author: Paul Date: ~ 65 AD

Background: Verses 12-17 insist that baptism is only a beginning. Life in the Spirit is a life of freedom, but it is always a freedom struggling with constant temptation. Life in the Spirit means being under the lordship of Christ. The baptized are not under obligation to the "flesh"; therefore they must contain the longings of the body (including pride as well as sensuality). We must be "driven" by the Spirit.

Theme: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God; but if you are in the Spirit you live.

Question: o Do we love our family enough to share our faith with them? Do we love the world enough to spread our faith?

Gospel: John 20:19-23, Author: John the Beloved ~ 85-90 AD

Background: Here, as in Acts, the Spirit empowers the Church for its mission ("even so I send you"). The mission is defined here as the forgiving and retaining of sins. The descent of the Holy Spirit initiated a new stage in the unfolding of God's purpose.

Theme: Bring others to salvation through forgiveness and accountability.

Question:

- Does your faith deserve greater zeal?
- How do we judge those we want to lead us?
- Do you believe Jesus speaks in different tongues, but offers the same truths to all?

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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.”

Reading 2: [Romans 8:8-17](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh;

on the contrary, you are in the spirit,
if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you,

although the body is dead because of sin,
the spirit is alive because of righteousness.
If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,
the one who raised Christ from the dead
will give life to your mortal bodies also,
through his Spirit that dwells in you.
Consequently, brothers and sisters,
we are not debtors to the flesh,
to live according to the flesh.
For if you live according to the flesh, you will die,
but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body,
you will live.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
but you received a Spirit of adoption,
through whom we cry, “Abba, Father!”
The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit
that we are children of God,
and if children, then heirs,
heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,
if only we suffer with him
so that we may also be glorified with him.

Gospel: [Jn 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.”

Pentecost Sunday :

Fr. John Kavanaugh

May 23, 2010

SJ, of St. Louis University

The Difference it Makes: "As the Father sent me, so I sent you."

Does being a Catholic Christian make any difference? On Pentecost we are supposed to celebrate the church, but what is the church? It is expected that we cherish our faith, that we value it enough to pass it on. But is it worth it? Is our church really all that much a cause for celebration? Has our faith been worth receiving? Is it worth giving? These days, I guess, we are not supposed to be too proud of our traditions and our identity. After all, diversity is king. One faith, we are told, is as good as another. There are many paths to the mountain top. Why should we be so arrogant as to assume that ours is the best?

But if we believe that, why would it make much sense to want to proclaim it to anyone else? In fact, if our faith is not all that special, why should we even be grateful for having it?

If we have nothing wonderful to give to the world, why would our children want to possess it? If we think that any way to God suffices, why should the way of the Lord Jesus be considered a gift to our young?

It is no secret that many of us elders wonder why so many of our youth seem not to take our church as seriously as we once did (or as seriously as we think we once did). We can say that the homilies are boring, that we should be as entertaining as MTV or the new supermarket cathedrals.

We can blame the music, the lack of reverence, the loss of chant, the irrelevance of sermons, the carping about money, the exclusive language, the inclusive language, and an almost infinite number of deficits.

But whatever it is, we lack the fire.

It was fire the Spirit bequeathed to our ancient brothers and sisters. They on fire and wanted to proclaim it to the world. They spoke of something that made a difference in their lives, something or someone they loved.

St. Paul tells us that the something they experienced was enough to make them feel like one vibrant body, unified in a common good and goal. They cherished differences, but only because of the different ways they revealed the one splendor of the gift they shared.

So what is our something, the common gift we share as Catholics? Certainly it is the gift held in common with all Christians: our Gospels, our Lord, our one faith, baptism, and communion. But for Catholics it is more.

The "catholic" dimension is holistic, organic, and integral. We come from a people whose encounter with Jesus Christ is inclusive and capacious.

He may speak different tongues to us, but the same truth. He shines in different gifts, but as one giver. He is our one body, our unity, but he thrives through different members.

Thus, Catholicism resists any move that reduces Christ to only one facet or moment of experience.

We find him in the holy word. But we know this is a scripture given to us by a community, our community. We see him in community, but we know our community was born of Christ and our memory of him. We pass the word on, but it is the word that made us who we are and brought us together.

As a people, we meet Christ in structures of law, magisterium, and tradition. We see him in those shining lights we call our saints, those leaders we call our hierarchy, those scholars we call our theologians.

We encounter him in the passages of our lives: our birthing and maturing, our failing and healing, our commitments and loves, our feeding and our dying. Thus sacraments, bestowed by Christ and sustained by the church, are signs of his presence holding together the warp and weft of our lives.

We find him in the movements of our hearts: our great pieties and devotions that remind us of the mysteries of his life. We find him in the discernment of spirits, the weighing of forces for joy and sadness. We hear him in the cry of the poor and read him in the signs of the times.

Christ is not confined to any one of these. He is not in our sanctuaries alone. He is not in the law alone. He is not in sacraments alone. He is not in scripture alone. He is not in the magisterium alone. He is not in our devotions, our saints, or our poor alone.

He lives in and through them all. And through them all he blesses and calls us. No one of them is supreme. Only he is supreme. And only in him do we find the spirit of God that vivifies all his parts.

Such a faith, ultimately faith in a person, deserves our zeal as much as our consent. I once asked a group of university students if they thought their faith was worth sharing, even preaching to others? The wisest answer was this: If you love someone or something enough, you want to share it. If you are in love, you can't wait to tell

someone else. If you love what it means to be a Catholic, it makes all the difference in the world that you give this gift to the ones you love. Ah, but do we love our faith enough? And do we love the world enough to impart our faith to it

John Pilch

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Mediterranean Leaders

Americans hold ambivalent opinions about leaders. While they readily applaud good leaders, they are never quite certain how to identify and certify good candidates for leadership.

Endorsements by influential figures or organizations no longer seem to carry much weight. Unfounded rumors and sensational reports in tabloids seem to be more important.

Our Mediterranean ancestors in the Faith took a different view of leaders and leadership.

For one, a legitimate leader had to be suitably “installed” as leader. Today’s gospel narrative contains the major elements of a “vocation commissioning” event, a literary form that is commonly used in the Bible to authenticate different kinds of leaders.

Introduction. Confronting bewildered disciples in a locked room, Jesus reassures them with a word (“Peace!”) and a gesture (displays his pierced hands and side). He is not a ghost but is alive, risen!

Commission. Jesus commissions the disciples after the pattern of his own commissioning by the Father. The commission is (1) formal (v. 21); (2) sealed by the gift of the Holy Spirit (v. 22); and (3) involves preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins (v. 23).

In John’s Gospel, sin is the failure to believe in Jesus as the One the Father has sent. Hence this commission is best interpreted as charging these new leaders to bring new members into the community.

It differs from the traditional understanding of forgiveness of sin in Matthew 18:19, which describes how the community deals with the sinfulness of its present members.

In the gospel story line, Jesus established and strengthened his credibility by winning every argument with his opponents. No matter how often people try to trick him or trip him up, he comes out on top. His honorable reputation and his credibility grows, and he is never shamed. . .

Until his death. Crucified just like and between two common criminals, Jesus suddenly seems to be overcome by the deepest possible cultural shame . . . until his resurrection.

Then it becomes clear that God is indeed pleased with this beloved Son, for by raising him from the dead God has honored him far more than any human accolades ever could.

All these ideas stand behind Jesus’ statement “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

That these newly commissioned disciples would be gifted with a very powerful spirit, the Holy Spirit (John 19:22), only guaranteed their efficaciousness.

Any first- or second-century Mediterranean native who heard or read today’s gospel verses would respect and accept these disciples as legitimate, honorable, and effective ministers commissioned by none other than Jesus, who had received from his Father the highest of honors: risen life.

Today’s gospel challenges Americans to reconsider how they select and evaluate leaders, both spiritual and secular

Every Catholic knows that today's solemnity ranks as one of the principal feasts of the Church. The reverence due to it is beyond all question, because this day is consecrated by the most sublime and wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit.

Ten days after the Lord ascended high above the heavens to sit at the right hand of God the Father, and fifty days after his resurrection, on the very same day of the week as this joyful season began, the day of Pentecost has dawned upon us.

In itself the feast of Pentecost contains great mysteries relating to the old dispensation as well as to the new, signs which clearly show that grace was heralded by the law and the law fulfilled by grace.

Fifty days after the sacrifice of the lamb marking the deliverance of the Hebrews from the Egyptians, the law was given on Mount Sinai; and fifty days from the raising up of Christ after his passion and immolation as the true lamb of God, the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles and assembled believers.

Thus the thoughtful Christian may easily perceive that the origin of the Old Testament laid the foundations of the gospel, and that the Spirit who was the author of the second covenant was the same Spirit who had established the first.

For as the apostles' story testifies,

when the days of Pentecost were fulfilled and all the disciples were together in one place, suddenly there came from heaven a sound like that of a strong driving wind which filled the whole house where they were sitting.

And there appeared to them tongues like flames of fire which came to rest on each one of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them the power of utterance.

O how swift is the word of wisdom, and where God is master how quickly the lesson is learnt! One needs no interpretation in order to understand, no practice in order to gain facility, no time in order to study.

The Spirit of truth breathes where he will, and each nation's own language has become common property in the mouth of the Church.

And so, ever since that day, the clarion call of the gospel has rung out; since the day of Pentecost a rain of charisms, a river of blessings, has watered every desert and dry land, *for the Spirit of God has swept over the waters to renew the face of the earth*, and a blaze of new light has shone out to dispel our former darkness.

In the light of those flaming tongues the word of the Lord has shone out clearly, and a fiery eloquence has been enkindled which is charged with the energy to enlighten, the ability to create understanding, and the power to bum away sin and destroy it.

(Sermon 75,1-3: CCL 138A, 465-468)

Leo the Great (c.400-461) was elected pope in 440. At a time of general disorder he did much to strengthen the influence of the Roman see. Although he was not a profound theologian, Leo's teaching is clear and forceful. His Tome was accepted as a statement of Christological orthodoxy at the Council of Chalcedon (451). One hundred and forty-three of his letters and ninety-six sermons have survived. The latter cover the whole of the liturgical year.

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WOW Word of the Day

Pentecost	May 23
Ascension:	May 16
	May 9
New Order Love one another as I have loved you.	May 2
Listening & Eternal Life	April 25
Strength I will always give you strength to feed my sheep.	April 18
Sent God sent me; so I send you. Doubting Thomas	April 11
Rise & Witness Easter Sunday	April 4
Empty Into your hands I commend my spirit. Palm Sunday	March 28
Mercy Whoever has not sinned, cast the first stone.	March 21
Hand Washing: Wash before the Big Banquet	March 14
Fruit: Bear fruit or wither and die	March 7
Transfiguration Lent is a time of change & conversion	Feb. 28
Temptation Get food & strength from God to resist temptation.	Feb. 21
Attitude Trust in God leads to blessings. Trust in humans alone leads to woe.	Feb. 14
Rise: Get in, get out and raise men to faith	Feb. 7
Faith: God performs miracles for those with faith and love.	Jan. 31
Word made Flesh: Jesus reads in the temple; He is the Son of Man	Jan. 24

