

Our Lady of the Airways Parish

Pentecost Sunday, 2020



Dear Friends in Christ,

“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Spirit of God dwelling within us” (Rom 5:5).

During the past seven weeks of our Easter Season, we have pondered upon the death, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord. The underpinning for each of these events is love! It was love that spurred Christ to die for our sins on the Cross of Calvary. It was love that ultimately freed mankind from the sting of death, when Jesus rose from the dead. And it was love that motivated our Lord to ascend into heaven and prepare a place for us in the Father’s kingdom. Remarkably, the immensity of Jesus’ love did not stop there! Jesus was so anxious to leave his apostles and return to the Father so that He could give His ultimate gift of love, the Holy Spirit. Jesus told them, *“If I go, I will send him [the Holy Spirit] to you” (John 16:7).* On this Pentecost Sunday, let us reflect upon the Holy Spirit - the gift of God’s own life within us - and consider what He means to us and our lives.

Pentecost was originally a Jewish feast called *Shebouth*, the feast of weeks. The Greek word, *pentecostē*, literally means the fiftieth. In Jewish tradition, Pentecost became the celebration that marked the conclusion of the Old Testament Covenant on Mt. Sinai. It was also a spring festival. Thus, many Jews came to Jerusalem from all over the world to celebrate this major feast, fifty days after the Feast of Harvest.

It is against this backdrop that we read the story of our first Christian Pentecost, which occurred fifty days after Jesus’ Resurrection. Our account comes from the Acts of the Apostles. Luke writes, *“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place....there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”* With these opening words, Luke highlights the Spirit’s mission in bringing the message of God’s love into the entire world. The good news of the new covenant of Christ was not intended exclusively for the Jewish nation, but for every nation. As St. Augustine remarks, *“The tongues in which they spoke as the Holy Spirit filled them were a foreshadowing of the Church’s preaching of the Gospel in the tongues of all the nations.”* Thus, the Spirit is the driving force behind the proclamation of the message of salvation intended for the entire world.

In the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, as the ancient people of that time were attempting to build a tower that could reach the heavens, they were suddenly unable to communicate with one another, due to a multiplicity of languages. In contrast to this confusion of tongues, the Holy Spirit gives the gift of understanding. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit broke down barriers, bridged gulfs, and united everyone to a single message. Luke tells us that *“there were devout Jews of every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in their own language.”* Although Jesus’ disciples, who were Galileans, were speaking their own language, those who were present heard it in their own native tongues: whether they were from Persia, Media, Cappadocia, Asia or Egypt. The Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to proclaim what God had done and accomplished through Jesus, and in turn gave their audience the capacity to understand everything in their own language.

Today it can be very tempting for us to make our Faith a personal and private affair. Our Faith is often ridiculed and denigrated by many people within our society. Others try to force us to keep our religious views to ourselves or outside the public form through threats, coercion or harassments. Despite these various forms of intimidations, our task remains the same as the first apostles. We have a mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. This mission is a responsibility and an obligation that belongs to everyone in the Church.

We can be easily overwhelmed by this challenging and difficult task. However, we are never alone in carrying it out. By virtue of our Baptism and Confirmation, we have received Jesus' great gift of the Holy Spirit. We have within us the same Holy Spirit who descended on the apostles that Pentecost day and is *"the very vitality of God who gives himself to men."* The divine gift of the Holy Spirit is *"also light and power: light, to proclaim the Gospel, the Truth revealed by God; power, to infuse the courage of witnessing to the faith, which the Apostles begin at that very moment"* (Saint John Paul II).

We have the same Holy Spirit who instructed the early missionaries, was responsible for the countless conversion of people to the new faith, gave courage to the early Christians who faced persecution and inevitable death, and was the inspiration and strength of Paul and his companions in their preaching journeys. If the Holy Spirit continues to *"pour light into our minds, arouses our desires and gives us strength"* (St. Peter Damian), why should we be afraid to carry out our evangelical mission? Let us be bold then in proclaiming the only message that is capable of opening borders, breaking down barriers, and shedding light into this world darkened by sin and division - the Good News of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

As we conclude our reflection, we beseech the Father to pour the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon us, the Church and all mankind.

Let us pray....

*"O God, who by the mystery of today's great feast
sanctify your whole Church in every people and nation,
pour out, we pray, the gifts of the Holy Spirit
across the face of the earth and,
with the divine grace that was proclaimed,
fill now once more the hearts of believers. Amen"*
(Collect of the Mass of Pentecost).

Yours in Christ,



Fr. Thomas Lim