

Pentecost Sunday
May 24, 2015
Church of St Leo the Great, Oakland, CA
Rev. Timothy K. Johnson

Reading **1ACTS 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 [PS 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 [GAL 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.

Sequence — Veni, Sancte Spiritus

Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine!

Come, Father of the poor!
Come, source of all our store!
Come, within our bosoms shine.

You, of comforters the best;
You, the soul's most welcome guest;
Sweet refreshment here below;

In our labor, rest most sweet;
Grateful coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.

O most blessed Light divine,
Shine within these hearts of yours,
And our inmost being fill!

Where you are not, we have naught,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill.

Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:

Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

On the faithful, who adore
And confess you, evermore
In your sevenfold gift descend;

Give them virtue's sure reward;
Give them your salvation, Lord;
Give them joys that never end. Amen.
Alleluia.

Alleluia

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

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

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

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."

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Homily

Today, we celebrate the transformation of the apostles and the handful of other believers in the good news of Jesus into the beginnings of a community of disciples of Jesus that has become our Christian Church. In a real sense, we can call this the birthday of our church community.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, his believers were shell-shocked, today we might even label it as post-traumatic, stress disorder. The believers' whole-known world of truths had been put on its head: their messiah had been put to a cruel death, dashing their hopes in his good news; three days later, he was risen from the dead, could-you-believe-it, in a world where no one before or since has done that; and sometime later, that Messiah gathered them together, gave a final word & blessing and ascended into heaven, another could-you-believe-it moment.

Shell-shocked, they gathered together, prayed, and tried to put all these mind-boggling events together in some order. They were withdrawn, timid, unsure of themselves, coming to grips with what they had just experienced. Then came the great Jewish Feast of Pentecost that gathered Jews from all over the world to Jerusalem to celebrate the fifty days that God spent with Moses on Mt. Sinai giving Israel the Law, the Ten Commandments, a defining moment in Israel's relationship with the Lord which set Israel apart from so many other nations.

On this great feast, the Holy Spirit of God the Father and Jesus, God's Son, came down on the unsure believers in a strong driving wind and appeared as tongues of fire resting on each of them. That Holy Spirit enflamed them, made sense of all their musings, and gave them the courage of their convictions to proclaim to all the curious onlookers outside the good news of Jesus' life, teachings, death, resurrection. They were emboldened by God's Spirit to crystallize their understanding of the crazy events of the previous few weeks, to believe them, and boldly to share that belief with the crowds wondering what the strong driving wind was all about. The strength of their convictions and preaching was so firm that the Jews from all over the world understood them, each in their own language, and were confused, astounded, amazed.

It is this same belief in the Good News of Jesus, the Christ, the same commitment to be disciples of Christ, and the same Holy Spirit that each one of us received in the sacraments of initiation probably, however, without the same drama as that first Christian Pentecost. It is that same Spirit of truth that Jesus promised in the Gospel that we just heard that guides us to all truth in the various and changing circumstances that mark each of our very different life choices and paths.

It is that same Holy Spirit that guides our lives as disciples away from the works of the flesh, as St. Paul said to the Galatians in the second reading. The fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. No one of us in the community possesses these fruits to 100% purity. But it is as a group, each individual acting in conformity with the rest, that we can trust God's Holy Spirit to guide us toward good discipleship and our work of building up God's reign of love here on earth as it is in heaven.

We have become a community of believers - - encouraged, guided, strengthened by God's Holy Spirit. We have come a long way since that first Christian Pentecost, which we celebrate today, and we have a long way to go to reach the goal of God's Kingdom of love -- established. In this celebration of the institution of our common path and support as a community of believers and in the joy of God's Spirit among us, we renew in ourselves a commitment actively to be about our challenge to love.

As we continue this great celebration of thanks to God, let us praise God for the gift of God's Spirit, who moves and supports us as disciples of Christ, and let us give God thanks by renewing our commitment to be attentive and respond to that Spirit's promptings to love like Jesus.