

**PENTECOST 5/23/10 ACTS 2:1-11; I COR 12:3-7, 12-13; JN. 20:19-23 (May 23, 2010)**

Pentecost literally means 50<sup>th</sup>. It is a feast celebrated on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Passover feast by the Jews and a feast celebrated on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the feast of the Resurrection of Jesus by the Christians.

On the day of Pentecost **1)** The Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and Blessed Virgin Mary as fiery tongues. **2)** The frightened apostles were transformed into fiery preachers and evangelizers by a special anointing of the Holy Spirit. **3)** The audience experienced a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit with the gift of tongues, hearing Peter speaking in their languages. **4)** The early Christians became powerful witnesses and brave martyrs for faith.

The feast commemorates the official inauguration of the Christian Church by the apostolic preaching of St. Peter, resulting in the conversion of 3000 Jews to the Christian faith. Pentecost is thus the official birthday of the Church.

The main theme of today's readings remind us that the gift of the Holy Spirit moves its recipients to action and inspires them to share this gift with others.

Today's gospel the risen Jesus by appearing to the disciples and inviting them to carry on the mission given to Him by his heavenly Father. He then empowered them to do so by breathing upon them and saying, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*" On the day of Pentecost Jesus fulfilled his promise to send the Advocate or Paraclete. The gift of the Spirit would also enable them to fulfill Jesus' commission to preach the gospel to all nations. Today's gospel passage also tells us how Jesus gave to the Apostles the power and authority to forgive sins. "*Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.*" These wonderful words which bind together inseparably the presence of the Holy Spirit *and* the gift of forgiveness are referred to directly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But they have a much wider meaning. Those words indicate the power we are *all* given of being the agents of forgiveness in the world of today.

We need to observe Pentecost every day. "It will always be Pentecost in the church," affirmed Oscar Romero, Archbishop of El Salvador. , on Pentecost Sunday 1978, The church will be fair to see, perennially young, attractive in every age, as long as she is faithful to the Spirit that floods her and she reflects that Spirit through her communities, through her pastors, through her very life" (*The Violence of Love*, The Plough Pub. Co., Farmington, PA: 1998). Archbishop Romero's words remind us -- as does today's Gospel -- that Pentecost is not just one day, but *every* day. Without breath, there is no life. Without the Spirit, the church is a field of dry, dead bones. Fulton J. Sheen once said about the Church, "Even though we are God's *chosen people*, we often behave more like God's *frozen people*--frozen in our prayer life, frozen in the way we relate with one

another, frozen in the way we celebrate our faith." Today is a great day to ask the Holy Spirit to rekindle in us the spirit of new life and enthusiasm, the fire of God's love. Let us repeat Cardinal Newman's favorite little prayer, "*Come Holy Spirit!*"

"Come Holy Spirit  
Make our ears to hear  
Make our eyes to see  
Make our mouths to speak  
Make our hearts to seek  
Make our hands to reach out  
And touch the world with your love. AMEN."

**Anecdote** # An old beggar lay on his deathbed. His last words were to his youngest son who had been his constant companion during his begging trips. "Dear son," he said, "I have nothing to give you except a cotton bag and a dirty bronze bowl which I got in my younger days from the junk yard of a rich lady." After his father's death, the boy continued begging, using the bowl his father had given him. One day a gold merchant dropped a coin in the boy's bowl and he was surprised to hear a familiar clinking sound. "Let me check your bowl," the merchant said. To his great surprise, he found that the beggar's bowl was made of pure gold. "My dear young man," he said, "why do you waste your time begging? You are a rich man. That bowl of yours is worth at least thirty thousand dollars." We Christians are often like this beggar boy who failed to recognize and appreciate the value of his bowl. We fail to appreciate the infinite worth of the Holy Spirit living within each of us, sharing His gifts and fruits and charisms with us. On this major feast day we are invited to experience and appreciate the transforming, sanctifying and strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit within us. This is also a day to renew the promises made to God during our Baptism and Confirmation, to profess our faith, and practice it.