

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST; Cycle – B; May 19th 2024
Acts 2:1-11; 1Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Of course, when we hear the word Pentecost what comes to our mind is the great event of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the 50th day of the resurrection of our Lord. In order to appreciate the greatness of this event we need to go back and see the mental condition of the apostles during these 50 days of post resurrection; and then compare the same with their life after the Pentecostal event. Though Jesus spoke enough about his death and resurrection, the apostles could not comprehend what he said; rather they were downcast worried about their future. In John's gospel we see Jesus also speaking about the power of the Holy Spirit at length; but it didn't strike the hearts of the apostles either. They were literally devastated and heartbroken over the arrest and death of Jesus and ran for their life. Though, after resurrection Jesus appeared to them a few times, their spirit was not boosted; rather they were disoriented without having any future plan of life. But the descent of the Holy Spirit brought a tremendous change in their lives. They were given the right orientation for their future ministry. No more they confined themselves in the four walls of the upper room. They came out in the middle of the Jews who gathered in Jerusalem for the celebration of the Jewish Pentecostal celebrations and bore witness to Jesus. The same Peter who was shaken by the question of a maid could speak boldly of the crucified and risen Christ in public.

On that day a few miraculous things happened by the power of the Holy Spirit. First of all, the Holy Spirit acted as a unifying factor. As we hear in the Book of Genesis, the people who were scattered due to the diversity of language started understanding the speech of Peter in their own mother tongue. In other words, the Holy Spirit united the people of different lands. Secondly, see how the fear and confusion being removed from the lives of the apostles! Even the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin were amazed at the boldness and wisdom of Peter and John. We read in the Acts, **“Observing the boldness of Peter and John and perceiving them to be uneducated, ordinary men, they were amazed, and they recognized them as the companions of Jesus” (Acts 4:13)**. Thirdly, by the power of the Holy Spirit the official Church was born. For on the very day of Pentecost itself 3000 people received baptism and joined the apostles.

If we take any other feasts, we know that they took place once in history and then over with it. But the great Feast of Pentecost is an ongoing feast. In other words, even after 2000 years the Holy Spirit is still very active in the Church in different areas and He leads the Church through the stormy sea, down the centuries.

Let us take the present picture of the modern Church; then, we realize how active the Holy Spirit is. Today the Church is a unity in diversity. Currently almost one billion Catholics are scattered all over the world. They belong to different race, language, culture and color. But they all remain under one umbrella of the Pope and Vatican. This unity is possible only through the works of the Holy Spirit. This same Spirit is the unifying factor in the communities and families. Though dissensions and disputes arise in the Church time to time, she still continues. The reason is that it is instituted by Jesus Christ and led by the Holy Spirit. So no power on earth can totally destroy the Church.

Jesus promised the apostles the Holy Spirit as an advocate who would support them in their struggles and help them to build the Church. As we know for 1500 years the Church remained one despite the persecutions and struggles she had to undergo. But the moment the Church leaders leaned on material and political power, instead of trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church started falling apart. These days we don't see the religious leaders and faithful giving due attention to the power of the Holy Spirit. Many don't even pray to the Holy Spirit these days for help. If we see today a lot of dissensions and disunity in the Church and the families, no doubt it reflects the absence of the Holy Spirit; if today the violence is increasing in the world, no doubt the Holy Spirit is absent in the lives of people; if you face constant struggles and failures in your daily life and cannot overcome them, then you need to check your relationship with the Holy Spirit; if you harbor hatred, ill feelings and unforgiving attitude towards your neighbor or family members and cannot love them, no doubt the Holy Spirit is absent in you. We have to make sure that we pray to the Holy Spirit daily for guidance and strength to fight against the temptations and evils. We need the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit in our lives, such as **wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.** This great feast invites us to renew our faith and trust in the Holy Spirit and encourages us to seek the help of the Spirit in all our struggles. Let the Holy Spirit be our constant companion.