

PENTECOST SUNDAY; Cycle – A; May 28th 2023
Acts 2: 1-11; 1Cor 12: 3-7, 12-13; John 19: 19-23

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

As the culmination of our Lenten observance, we celebrate **the Easter, the Ascension and the Pentecost**. The Ascension of the Lord commences on the 40th day of the Resurrection of Jesus and Pentecost is celebrated on the 50th day of the Resurrection. Actually the Christians borrowed the term Pentecost from the Jewish celebration of the Pentecost, which has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. The reason is that it is believed that the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles on the day of the Jewish Pentecostal celebration. So the disciples of Jesus called the great event of the descent of the Holy Spirit as Pentecost. With this celebration the Easter Season comes to a close and then we enter the liturgical cycle of Ordinary Time.

Only the Book of the Acts of the Apostles gives us a pretty detailed account of the Pentecostal event in chapter 2: 1-11. Whereas the synoptic gospels are totally silent about the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. It is only in John's gospel we have rather a clear picture of the Holy Spirit especially in the farewell speech of Jesus (John 13-17). In John's gospel the Holy Spirit is presented as '**Another Advocate, or a Counselor.**' Jesus says, "**I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always.**" (Jn. 14: 16). But John too gives us very little information about the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. As John writes in his gospel, Jesus appeared to the disciples on the same Sunday when he rose from the dead and commissioned them to go out to bear witness to the gospel and then he breathed on them the Spirit. John writes, "**When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.**"

On the other hand, The Acts of the Apostles not only gives us the full account of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles but also gives us the activities of the Holy Spirit in the first century Church. It is said that every missionary activity was guided by the Holy Spirit. In the first 13 chapters of the Acts, there are more than **forty references** to the Holy Spirit. The early Church was a Spirit-filled Church, and that was the only source of its power. For instance, it was the power of the Spirit which gave courage to Peter on Pentecostal day to go to the Temple area and preach about the crucified Christ before a big crowd. We also find the amazing unity of languages taking place on that time which was lost at the construction of the tower of Babel. For, the people of different languages understood the speech of Peter in their own language. Also it is said that on that very day 3000 people joined the new community. So the Pentecostal day marks the official birth of the Church. We can find many incidents where the Holy Spirit

intervening directly in the lives of the Apostles. For instance, the Spirit moves Philip to make contact with the Ethiopian eunuch, (Acts 8: 29); the Spirit prepares Peter for the coming of the messengers from Cornelius. (Acts 10: 19) and orders Peter to go with these messengers, (Acts 11:12); the Holy Spirit sets aside Paul and Barnabas for preaching the gospel among the gentiles, (Acts 13:2, 4). In short, all the leaders of the Church were men of the Spirit.

Besides the Book of the Acts of the Apostles and John's gospel, to know more about the Holy Spirit we have to go through the letters of St. Paul to different Churches. St. Paul attributes his missionary achievements to the Holy Spirit. As Paul sees, without the help of the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. **Let us go through some of the sayings of Paul about the Holy Spirit. Paul says, "No one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit" (1Cor. 12:3). "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1Cor 3:16). God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5: 5). "We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groaning" (Rom. 8:26).**

Holy Spirit was the great power Jesus offered to the disciples in building up the Church. She grew stronger by the work of the Holy Spirit despite the trials she had to handle. Unfortunately, we find Holy Spirit missing from the lives of people somewhere down the centuries. The only time many people thought about the Holy Spirit was at the time of Confirmation and later they never bothered about the Holy Spirit at all, though they prayed to the Heavenly Father and Jesus. Please look into yourselves and see what the role of the Holy Spirit is in your daily life. Remember, when Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit, he meant that he would help us only through the Spirit. If we see a lot of confusions and scandals in the Church today and in the individuals' life, we have to conclude that there is the absence of the Holy Spirit. We should pray to the Holy Spirit daily, before we begin our day, before we make a decision and do something important. We were taught about the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit in our Catechism classes and they remain forgotten. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit every day for these gifts such as: **wisdom, good counsel, fortitude, understanding, knowledge, piety and fear of God. If we move with the spirit daily, no doubt he will guide us along the right path.**