

PENTECOST SUNDAY; June 8th 2025; Cycle – C
Acts 2: 1-11; 1Cor. 12: 3b-7, 12-13; John 20: 19-23

Dear sisters & Brothers,

The Jews always believed in a single God, not as Trinitarian. Whereas in the teaching of Jesus God is presented as **Father, Son and Holy Spirit; but the Godhead of one unity**. The idea of the Spirit of God is prevalent in the Old Testament starting from the Book of Genesis, but not as the Holy Spirit. In Genesis 2: 7 and Ezekiel 37: 1-14 the life giving breath of God is considered to be the Spirit of God. For the Hebrew word **‘Ruah’ stands for wind, breath and Spirit**. In Genesis we see *God breathing into the nostrils of the man* He had formed out of clay and the man became alive. In the Book of Ezekiel God commanded the Prophet to prophesy to *the Spirit to breath into the dry bones* and they became living human beings. In John’s gospel chapter 20: 22 we see the risen **Lord breathing on the disciples** and giving them the Holy Spirit. This was the only Pentecostal experience of the disciples according to the four gospels.

The mentioning of the Holy Spirit is something unique only in the New Testament. At the same time, the idea is not borrowed from the Old Testament either. In the New Testament for the first time the Holy Spirit is revealed in the beginning of the gospel of Luke, mostly in chapter 1. In Luke the angel promised Zachariah that John the Baptist would be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1: 15) At the annunciation, to the question of Mary to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” The angel replied, **“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.”** At the greeting of Mary, it is said that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1: 41-42). On the occasion of the naming of John the Baptist, his father Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and started prophesying (Luke 1:67). It is at the time of the Baptism of Jesus we find the physical appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. Here the Father is also revealed through His voice. (Luke 3:21-22). Thereafter, during the public life of Jesus we see the reference to the Holy Spirit being scattered in the Synoptic gospels. Whereas in John Jesus speaks in details about the Holy Spirit and his role in the future ministry of the apostles in **chapters 14, 15 and 16**. Here Jesus calls the Holy Spirit, **‘the Advocate and Counselor.’**

The dramatic Pentecostal event is described only in the Acts of the Apostles 2: 1-4. One thing we notice that after receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples who were hiding inside the closed room, for fear of the Jews, came out in the open and started proclaiming the crucified and risen Lord without any fear. We see another dramatic change taking place among the people who came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Pentecost, from different nations and who spoke different languages. Though Peter may have addressed

the crowd in Aramaic or Hebrew, the people understood it in each one's language. Through this incident Luke wishes to affirm that the event of the coming down of the Holy Spirit overcame the division or language barrier among the people which happened at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:19).

Once again people understood one language when they listened to the Word of God spoken by Peter. Hereafter, if we go through the Acts of the Apostles we realize how powerful was the Holy Spirit in building up the new communities, including among gentile nations. The disciples never did anything without listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Spirit was visible in their missionary work. In 1Cor 12:3 Paul says, **"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."** This short verse shows how dependent we are on the Holy Spirit.

During the severe persecution of three centuries, if the Christians remained united, it was thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit. Today the Church is the unity in diversities. Currently there are thousands of Christian denominations to which two billion Christians belong. **They belong to different nations, culture, color, race and languages still we are united by the Holy Spirit as one as we follow the same Jesus Christ.** In today's second reading from 1Cor. 12, St. Paul sees the Universal Church as one Body with different parts. Similarly, in every community of believers there are members with different talents, views and ideas but we are united as we belong to the same community. With the help of the Holy Spirit when all these talents and ideas put together, a vibrant community is formed.

The Holy Spirit abides and works in each one of us and we need to recognize His voice. If there are a lot of dissensions, disunity and unrest in the families and societies today, it is due to the absence of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Holy Spirit dwells, there we have the peace, joy and unity, in our hearts, families, communities and nation as a whole. Please remember, the Holy Spirit is the force behind in every good thing we do; every right decision we make and every achievement we make. So we need to ask for the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit such as, **wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God.** A simple resolution we all can make as we celebrate this great Feast **that we will never start the day without praying to the Holy Spirit.**