

Pentecost Sunday

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

Pentecost is the day on which the ‘Holy Fireball’ came down from heaven to give birth to many ‘fireballs’ on earth. With the Solemnity of Pentecost, we celebrate the official inauguration and birth of the Church. On this day, the Apostles received the Holy Spirit and immediately embarked to preach the Gospel of Jesus to every nation.

The root word of ‘Pentecost’ is from the Greek word *pentekoste* that means the ‘fiftieth.’ The Jews celebrate the feast of Pentecost as *Shavuot* to commemorate God’s gift of the Ten Commandments and the Torah to the world. Shavuot also marks the beginning of the wheat harvest in Israel. Traditionally, this holiday involved Jewish men travelling to Jerusalem to offer the first fruits of their harvest as offerings to God.

Now for the disciples of Jesus and the Church, Pentecost celebrates the fulfillment of the promise made by Jesus: that is, the descent and accompaniment of the Holy Spirit on them that will remain with them forever; a harvest of heavenly blessings on the lives of the Apostles. With the outpouring of this Gift, they were imbued with the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and their lives were filled with the ‘new wine.’ When the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles, a new life of fullness and abundance began; a total, complete, and comprehensive transformation occurred in their lives. Filled with the fruits of the Holy Spirit they became courageous, confident, and conscious of their mission. In other words, they became true disciples of Jesus, dissolving all divisions among them, uniting them, and bringing forth spiritual healing in all of them. To use an analogy, the Holy Spirit descended like an atomic weapon into these poor souls, sparking a fusion beyond human imagination and understanding. This spark ignited into a huge fireball, giving spark and consuming anyone whom these fiery disciples encountered.

A crucial detail recorded in the Gospel is that all the disciples were gathered together in one room on Pentecost. It was upon this unity that the Holy Spirit descended. The Holy Spirit cannot work in a divided family or a divided community.



In his homily on May 18, Pope Leo XIV drew on a lovely metaphor to describe the Holy Spirit: "... the working of the Holy Spirit, who was able to bring us into harmony, like musical instruments, so that our heartstrings could vibrate in a single melody." In the face of a world marked by so much discord and wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, fear, and economic instability, when the Holy Spirit permeates into all these situations, a new order will emerge.

Why do we sometimes fail to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in us? It is because certain situations blind us into following the worldly spirit. The story of the prodigal son teaches us about a life led by the worldly spirit, and the point at which the Spirit of the Lord starts to function. The story begins with the prodigal son following unspiritual behaviour that was mostly concerned about the world and its pleasures. By casting away and disregarding the love of his father to pursue his desires, travelling far from his family and his loved ones, we can conclude that he was enraptured and consumed by the world's spirit. Eventually, another phase emerged, where the Spirit of Truth revealed itself, gradually causing him to realise that whatever he tried to grab a hold of to make himself feel happy was elusive and not real. With this revelation came a concrete about-face, a 'U-turn' back to reality: to the Truth. At the end of the story, the Spirit of Truth built a new world in the life of the prodigal son; a life full of love, hope, fraternity, joy, and peace. A new order was born.

It is the Holy Spirit who helps us to know more about Jesus, and it is the Holy Spirit who moves and enables faith to flourish. As Saint Paul says: "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3).

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