

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, May 19th 2013

Pentecost Sunday

We might be more careful about what we pray for in preparation for the feast of Pentecost. This celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the early Church dispensed with being casual and the strictly private life-style. It might be safer to celebrate this feast by praying that the Spirit rest more upon others around us **WHOM WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE CHANGED**. To pray for the Spirit's coming more into our own individual lives might end up being the change others have been waiting for in our way of being and acting.

We pray then with courage to be inspired to the heartfelt life. We can pray for the Church and our new Pope Francis that we continue cooperating with the guidance the Spirit promises. We may ask this mysterious God to send this mysterious Spirit so that we might live more trustingly the mysterious lives we have and are.

REFLECTION

The Jews were gathered for their celebration of Pentecost, that is seven weeks after celebrating the Passover. It was an agricultural festival of giving thanks for the early crop. Some of those Jews had become followers of Jesus and of course, as Jews, they were to come to Jerusalem for the feast. What we hear in the First Reading is the surprising event of a Holy Wind and Fire Storm.

This Spirit's coming brings about great changes in the lives of those early "inspired" Jews. The ability to speak and understand different languages is only the first. They were enabled to understand and speak to the differences within the human community. As they were gathered together to give thanks to God for the abundance of the fields, these men and their followers were to spread the news "of the mighty acts of God." Through the Acts of the Apostles, we read of these "mighty acts of God" which present a new sense of Pentecost.

The earth brings forth harvested grain through the planting of human hands and the sun and rain from the skies. The new Pentecost is our celebrations of how God's Spirit sent from the skies, brings forth a harvest of good works through the cooperation of human hands. In a sense, the Church is a "Pentecost". It remains a gathering to give thanks for the abundance of "mighty acts of God" which

are breathed into the human structure of the Church and into its members. We ponder, sing of, write about, and proclaim that God's Spirit is faithful to God's continuous creation.

The Second Reading holds a wonderful physical image expressing the work of the Holy Spirit. The human body has many parts. The human Church, the human race both have many aspects. The Church, like the human body, does many different things, but when guided by the spirit, it becomes the Body of Christ. As our face can reveal an aspect of our total person, so each of us reveals something of the Person and mystery of God. What a great way to really live!!

A great way not to live is hiding for fear. The Gospel pictures John's view of how the Pentecost took place. Locked in, not even a real gathering, the remnant-ten seem to be sitting in separation. Jesus rises in their midst and breathes the Spirit upon their fragmentation after the greeting of peace. His presence removes their absence and they rejoice to hear his words and see the signs of his glory.

As with all his encounters with the broken, lost and hurt, Jesus meets them with their pasts, in their now-times, but has a future-eye for their lives. Mission! Jesus meets them, the early Church and has a Reconciliation Service right on the spot. He then says, "I do not retain your sins, so whose sins are you going to retain?" He will tell them that as he has been sent to them, they are sent out and into and for this world he came to redeem. What a way to live!

The work of the Holy Spirit is to make holy flesh, incarnation, that is. We remember the story in the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel where he was taken out into a valley covered with bones. God's breath moved over this semi-cemetery

And flesh recovered the bones and the bodies recovered life.

This yearly celebration recalls the present, now-happening, breathing of God's Spirit among us. In our part of the northern hemisphere grass, flowers, trees, berries and the ever-present dandelions are all in bloom. The warming breezes, have brought our dead lands to life. It is this wonderful event of God's continually bringing us back- up- to more life which is nature's celebration. It is our celebration as well.

The Holy Spirit "overshadowed" the empty womb of Mary "and there was Light", but more, the Light Made Flesh. That same Spirit is sent to "overshadow" us and bring our flesh into that same "light" and

“Life” and bring forth the Flesh of Jesus again and again. As our Jewish ancestors planted the crops and relied on God to give the increase, so do we, so does the Church in our times. The Spirit gives life through us to whom the Spirit has also given life. We plant the seeds and God’s Spirit, like the warm breezes, brings forth a new abundance of life.

Jesus is still breathing his Spirit upon us and continually urges us to “Mission!” and give life by forgiving and then giving life through the holiness of the always-recovering, Spirit-charged holy flesh of our bodies.

“There lives the dearest freshness deep down things
because the Holy Ghost over the bent world
broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings.”

God’s Grandeur G. M. Hopkins, S.J. 1877

Larry Gillick, S.J.