



Living the Gospel



PENTECOST SUNDAY— May 23, 2010

Theme: "Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I sent you."

Gathering Prayer

All: God our Father, let the Spirit you sent on our Church to begin the teaching of the gospel continue to work in the world through the hearts of all who believe We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, one God forever and ever. **Amen.**

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: John 20:19-23

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the door were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I sent you." ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive sins of any, they are forgiven; and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Gospel Notes

19-20. Jesus appears to the Apostles on the evening of the day on which he rose. He presents himself in their midst without any need for the doors to be opened, by using the qualities of his glorified body; but in order to dispel any impression that he is only a spirit he shows them his hands and his side: there is no longer an doubt that he is Jesus himself. About him being truly risen from the dead. He greets them twice using the words of greeting customary among

Jews, with the same tenderness as he previously used put into this salutation. These friendly words dispel the fear and the shame the Apostles must have been feeling at behaving so disloyally during his passion: he has recreated the normal atmosphere of intimacy, and now he will endow them with transcendental powers.

21. Pope Leo XIII explained how Christ transferred his own mission to the Apostles: "What did he wish in regard to the Church just founded, or about to be founded? This" to transmit to it the same mission and the same mandate which he had received from the Father, that they should be perpetuated. This he clearly resolved to do: this he actually did. 'As the Father hath sent me, even so I send you' (Jn 20:21). 'As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world' (Jn 17:18). [...] When about to ascend into heaven he sends his Apostles in virtue of the same power by which he had sent from the Father; and he charges them to spread abroad and propagate his teachings (cf. Mt 28:18), so that those obeying the Apostles might be saved, and those disobeying should perish (cf. Mk 16:16).[...] Hence he commands that the teaching of the Apostles should be religiously accepted and piously kept as if it were his own: 'He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me' (Lk 10:16). Wherefore the Apostles are ambassadors of Christ as he is the ambassador of the Father" (Leo XIII, *Satis cognitum*). In this mission the bishops are the successors of the Apostles: "Christ sent the Apostles as he himself had been sent by the Father, and then through the Apostles made their successors, the bishops, sharers in his consecration and mission. The function of the bishops' ministry was handed over in a subordinate degree to priests so that they be appointed in the order of the priesthood and be co-workers of the episcopal order for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ" (Vatican II, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 2).

22-23. The Church has always understood-and has in fact defined-that Jesus Christ here conferred on the Apostles authority to forgive sins, a power which is exercised in the sacrament of Penance. "The Lord then especially instituted the sacrament of Penance when, after being risen from the dead, he breathed upon his disciples and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit...'. The consensus of all the Fathers has always acknowledged that by this action so sublime and words so clear the power of forgiving and retaining sins was given to the Apostles and their lawful successors for reconciling the faithful who have fallen after Baptism" (Council of Trent, *De Paenitentia*, chap 1).

The sacrament of Penance is the most sublime expression of God's love and mercy towards men, described so vividly in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (cf. Lk 15: 11-32). The Lord always awaits us, with his arm wide open, waiting for us to repent-and then he will forgive us and restore us to the dignity of being his sons.

The Popes have consistently recommended Christians to have regular recourse to this sacrament: "For a constant and speedy advancement in the path of virtue we highly recommend the pious practice of frequent confession, introduced by the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; for by this means we grow in true knowledge of ourselves and in the Christian humility, bad habits are uprooted, spiritual negligence and apathy are prevented, the conscience is purified and the will strengthened, salutary spiritual direction is obtained, and grace is increased by the efficacy of the sacrament itself" (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*).

Gospel Reflection

We tend for many reasons to shun standing alone. The last one standing, waiting to be chosen to be on a side for a children's game, is never comfortable.

Even standing alone for a principle can tend to sow seeds of doubt, anxiety, and uncertainty. Conversely, we say and experience that there is strength in numbers. When others support us concerning a dearly held principle, we are encouraged. When others speak up on our behalf, we are relieved. When others help us with a daunting task, we are energized. There is solidarity in standing together that affirms, strengthens, and fortifies convictions and acts. We don't like to stand alone.

The gospel selection for this Pentecost Sunday is taken from Jesus farewell discourse to his disciples. He is preparing them for when he will no longer be with them. While Jesus is present, he is the advocate who teaches and models how the disciples should love him by keeping his commandments and words. After Jesus ascension, the disciples no longer will have him present to them in the same way. Yet Jesus never leaves his disciples completely, for as the Father sent Jesus, so does the Father send the Spirit, a new Advocate who teaches and reminds disciples of all Jesus said and did.

With the sending of the Holy Spirit who is "another Advocate," we followers of Jesus are never bereft of divine presence. This new Advocate teaches us just as Jesus taught the first disciples. This new Advocate "calls" (*L.advocare* = to call) us to faithful

discipleship and “supports” (*G.parakletos* = helper) us in our efforts to love Jesus. This new Advocate enables us to love and live as Jesus did, continuing his saving mission and making him present through us.

God can give us no greater gift than share in the very life of God’s divine presence. This is what we celebrate on this solemnity of Pentecost-God dwells within us, giving us a share in divine life. Moreover, since we all share in the same life, the Spirit is the bond of unity among us. Pentecost is a celebration of both the gift of the Spirit and the effects of that gift-we are sharers in the one Body of Christ and take up Jesus’ mission to preach the Good News of salvation.

We followers of Jesus never stand alone. We always have the Spirit who dwells within and among us. Moreover we have each other. We all share in the same life, the same mission, the same love. There is strength in numbers. Our strength is the gift of the Spirit who binds us in love and unity as the one body of Christ.

Living the Paschal Mystery

By this indwelling of the Holy Spirit we ourselves become advocates of God’s presence for others. This gift of the Spirit, then, makes its demands on us. We must monitor the way we live so that others truly see us advocates of God’s presence bringing new life.

This new life that we share with others might be as simple as a reassuring touch or helping hand. It might be as great as making a sacrifice of time to join the parish choir or volunteering for some task that needs to be done for the good of all. Living the Gospel means that we bask in the good gift of God’s life that the Spirit brings. Living the paschal mystery means that this good gift has its cost-we still must die to ourselves in order to be the true presence of Christ for others.

New and Old Testament links

First Reading — Acts 2: 1-11

¹ When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. ² And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. ³ Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all

filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. ⁶ At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? ⁹ We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34

¹ Bless the LORD, my soul! LORD, my God, you are great indeed! You are clothed with majesty and glory ...

²⁴ How varied are your works, LORD! In wisdom you have wrought them all; the earth is full of your creatures. ...

²⁹ When you hide your face, they are lost. When you take away their breath, they perish and return to the dust from which they came. ³⁰ When you send forth your breath, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth. ³¹ May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD be glad in these works! ...

³⁴ May my theme be pleasing to God; I will rejoice in the LORD.

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

³ Therefore, I tell you that nobody speaking by the spirit of God says, "Jesus be accursed." And no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the holy Spirit.

⁴ There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; ⁵ there are different forms of service but the same Lord; ⁶ there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. ⁷ To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. ...

¹² As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. ¹³ For in one

Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit

Catechism of the Catholic Church

643. Given all these testimonies, Christ's Resurrection cannot be interpreted as something outside the physical order, and it is impossible not to acknowledge it as an historical fact. It is clear from the facts that the disciples' faith was drastically put to the test by their master's Passion and death on the cross, which he had foretold. (Cf. *Lk* 22:31-32.) The shock provoked by the Passion was so great that at least some of the disciples did not at once believe in the news of the Resurrection. Far from showing us a community seized by a mystical exaltation, the Gospels present us with disciples demoralized ("looking sad" {*Lk* 24:17; cf. *Jn* 20:19}) and frightened. For they had not believed the holy women returning from the tomb and had regarded their words as an "idle tale". (*Lk* 24:11; cf. *Mk* 16:11,13) When Jesus reveals himself to the Eleven on Easter evening, "he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen." (*Mk* 16:14.)

645. By means of touch and the sharing of a meal, the risen Jesus establishes direct contact with his disciples. He invites them in this way to recognize that he is not a ghost and above all to verify that the risen body in which he appears to them is the same body that had been tortured and crucified, for it still bears the traces of his Passion. (Cf. *Lk* 24:30,39-40,41-43; *Jn* 20:20,27; 21:9,13-15.) Yet at the same time this authentic, real body possesses the new properties of a glorious body: not limited by space and time but able to be present how and when he wills; for Christ's humanity can no longer be confined to earth, and belongs henceforth only to the Father's divine realm. (Cf. *Mt* 28:9, 16-17; *Lk* 24:15, 36; *Jn* 20:14, 17, 19, 26; 21:4.) For this reason too the risen Jesus enjoys the sovereign freedom of appearing as he wishes: in the guise of a gardener or in other forms familiar to his disciples, precisely to awaken their faith. (Cf. *Mt* 28:9, 16-17; *Lk* 24:15,36; *Jn* 20:14,17,19,26; 21:4.)

858. Jesus is the Father's Emissary. From the beginning of his ministry, he "called to him those whom he desired; . . . And he appointed twelve, whom also he named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach." (*Mk* 3:13-14) From then on, they would also be his "emissaries" (Greek *apostoloi*). In them, Christ

continues his own mission: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." (*Jn* 20:21; cf. 13:20; 17:18.) The apostles' ministry is the continuation of his mission; Jesus said to the Twelve: "he who receives you receives me." (*Mt* 10:40; cf. *Lk* 10:16.)

1120. The ordained ministry or *ministerial* priesthood is at the service of the baptismal priesthood. (Cf. *LG* 10 § 2.) The ordained priesthood guarantees that it really is Christ who acts in the sacraments through the Holy Spirit for the Church. The saving mission entrusted by the Father to his incarnate Son was committed to the apostles and through them to their successors: they receive the Spirit of Jesus to act in his name and in his person. (Cf. *Jn* 20:21-23; *Lk* 24:47; *Mt* 28:18-20.) The ordained minister is the sacramental bond that ties the liturgical action to what the apostles said and did and, through them, to the words and actions of Christ, the source and foundation of the sacraments.

1287. This fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah's, but was to be communicated to *the whole messianic people*. (Cf. *Ezek* 36:25-27; *Joel* 3:1-2.) On several occasions Christ promised this outpouring of the Spirit, (Cf. *Lk* 12:12; *Jn* 3:5-8; 7:37-39; 16:7-15; *Acts* 1:8.) a promise which he fulfilled first on Easter Sunday and then more strikingly at Pentecost. (Cf. *Jn* 20:22; *Acts* 2:1-14.) Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim "the mighty works of God," and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. (*Acts* 2:11; Cf. 2:17-18.) Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn. (Cf. *Acts* 2:38)

Sharing and Discussion

1. What are God's purposes for having the Holy Spirit give us gifts, services, and workings?
2. Specifically in this passage what activities are associated with receiving the Holy Spirit?
3. How are these activities fulfilled within the Church, the body of Christ, and within individual Christians?

Closing Prayer

All: Saving God, you send your Spirit to dwell within us and make us your children: hear these our prayers that we might always be fit dwelling places and bring your presence to all we meet. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Saturday 10am - 12pm at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)

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