

Pentecost Goes on.....

Homily for June 4th, 2006—Pentecost Sunday

Act. 2:1-11; Gal. 5:16-25; Jn.15: 26-27, 16:12-15

The feast of Pentecost is a call to re-live the greatest intervention of God in human history—the first Pentecost at the Upper Room—when the Apostles were “*clothed with power from on High*” (Lk. 24: 49), when they were “*baptized with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts. 1:15), when men of every language joined in one song of praise to God, and when hundreds of thousands of Jews from every Nation under heaven heard the Apostolic preaching in their own tongues of the mighty acts of God. It was exactly there that the Church was born as a living community of the People of God, as a community conscious of its mission in the history of man. Gathered in that same Cenacle which had been the place of the first Eucharist, and then of the first meeting with the Risen Lord, the Apostles *discovered the power of the Spirit*. Made strong by that power, they began to act, that is, to carry through their service. Hence, to re-live the Pentecost is not one of the different aspects of the Christian life, but it is **the** Christian life. Hence the radical statement of Pope Paul VI “The first need of the Church is always to live Pentecost”.

What does it mean to re-live the Pentecost?

It means to receive the Power of the Holy Spirit just as the Apostles and first disciples (Apostolic Church) received the outpouring of Holy Spirit on First Pentecost Sunday and live in that power. Pole John Paul said “Holy Spirit is our secret strength, I would say, the inexhaustible reserve and propellant energy of all our thinking and doing as Christians”. St Iraeneus, one of the great Early Fathers of the Church says: “Like parched ground, which yields no harvest unless it receives moisture, we who were once like a waterless tree could never have lived and borne fruit without this abundant rainfall from above...If we are not to be scorched and made unfruitful, we need the dew of God. Since we have our accuser, we need an Advocate as well”.

To live the Pentecost is to fan into flame the Spirit what we have received in abundance at the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is to obey the words of Paul: “I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6) to such an effective way as to live the Sacrament by actively using the seven gifts (Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of the Lord) and nine charisms (word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discernment of the spirits, gift of healing, working of miracles, gift of faith, prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues) of the Spirit producing all the nine fruits (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) of the Holy Spirit in day to day life. It is then that we become strong to fight against sin, selfishness and worldliness, and allow the Holy Spirit to carve constantly the image of Christ in us as He carved Jesus first in Mary with her cooperation. Hence, in today’s 2nd reading Paul says: “*Live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want*” (Gal. 5:16-17).

Unfortunately, many of the “good Catholics” do not thirst for the gifts and special gifts (charisms) of the Holy Spirit, which alone make can them **powerful** Christians. Many are “*allergic*” to *Gifts* like gift of tongue, gift of prophecy, gift of healing etc. They either look upon them either as beyond their reach or as something not *necessary* for a

Christian. As a result they remain “good Christians” but not powerful Christians. They are unable to spread the Gospel effectively. In fact they are really tricked by Satan because only powerful Christians are threat to satan’s kingdom; “good Christians are very harmless to him, because they won’t snatch men and women from his hands. Hence the 2nd Vatican Council in “*Lumen Gentium*” said “It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills,(114) He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit"(115). These **charisms**, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church”.

From this it is clear that when we show indifference to the gifts and Charisms of the Holy Spirit we are making us powerless so as to slip into our lower nature, creating obstacles in the way of God to accomplish His work through us, and denying the world many a great service we can render it through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, on this Feast of Pentecost let us repent for opposing the Holy Spirit and grieving Him in the past by not letting Him the Lord of our lives. Let us open wide our heart to Him. Let us welcome Him to take full charge of our lives and act through us as He wants. Let us not put any limitation to Him by being indifferent to His any of the Gifts. Let us take it as a challenge to learn more about Him and His mysterious manifestations and be open to all His gifts. Let us never again say ‘I am not comfortable with certain gifts’. Let us not ‘become god’ let Holy Spirit be our God.

Fr. Jose Uppani