

June 4, 2017: Pentecost Homily John 20:19-23

Pentecost literally means 50th. It is a feast celebrated on the 50th day after the Passover feast by the Jews and a feast celebrated on the 50th day after the feast of the Resurrection of Jesus by the Christians. The Jewish Pentecost was originally a post-harvest thanksgiving feast. Later, the Jews included in it the remembrance of God's Covenants with Noah after the Deluge and with Moses at Mt. Sinai

The event: On the day of Pentecost **1)** The Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and the Blessed Virgin Mary as fiery tongues. **2)** The frightened apostles were transformed into fiery preachers and evangelizers and were given the gift of tongues by a special anointing of the Holy Spirit. **3)** The listeners experienced a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit through the apostles' gift of tongues: they heard Peter speaking in their native languages. **4)** The early Christians became powerful witnesses and brave martyrs for their Faith in Jesus.

The role of the Holy Spirit in Christian life: **1)** As an indwelling God, He makes us His Living Temples (I Cor 3:16). **2)** As a strengthening God, He strengthens us in our fight against temptations and in our mission of bearing witness to Christ by transparent Christian lives. **3)** As a sanctifying God, He makes us holy through the Sacraments: **a)** He makes us children of God and heirs of Heaven through Baptism. **b)** He makes us temples of God, warriors and defenders of the Faith, through Confirmation. **c)** He enables us to be reconciled with God by pardoning our sins through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. **d)** He gives us spiritual nourishment via the Holy Eucharist by converting bread and wine into Jesus' Body and Blood through Epiclesis. **4)** As a teaching and guiding God, He clarifies and constantly reminds us of Christ's teachings. **5)** As a listening and talking God, He listens to our prayers and enables us to pray, and

He speaks to us mainly through the Bible. **6)** As a Giver of gifts, He gives us His gifts, fruits and charisms.

We need to permit the Holy Spirit to take control of our lives: **1)** by constantly remembering His holy presence and behaving well; **2)** by praying for His daily anointing so that we may fight against our temptations and control our evil tendencies, evil habits and addictions; **3)** by asking His daily assistance to pray, listening to God through meditative Bible reading and talking to Him; and **4)** by asking the help of the Holy Spirit to do good for others and to be reconciled with God and others every day.

We need to permit the Holy Spirit to direct our lives: **a)** by constantly remembering and appreciating His Holy Presence within us, especially through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation; **b)** by fortifying ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit against all types of temptations; **c)** by seeking the assistance of the Holy Spirit in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and in the breaking of our evil habits; **d)** by listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the Bible and through the good counsel of others; **e)** by fervently praying for the gifts, fruits and charisms of the Holy Spirit; **f)** by renewing our lives through the anointing of the Holy Spirit; and **g)** by living our lives in the Holy Spirit as lives of commitment, of sacrifice, and of joy. We are called to love as Jesus loved, not counting the cost. As Saint Paul exhorts us, *"Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit"* (Galatians 5:16, 25).

Treasure within: An old beggar lay on his deathbed. His last words were to his youngest son who had been his constant companion during his begging trips. "Dear son," he said, "I have nothing to give you except a cotton bag and a dirty bronze bowl which I got in my younger days from the junk yard of a rich lady." After his father's death, the boy continued begging, using the bowl

his father had given him. One day a gold merchant dropped a coin in the boy's bowl and he was surprised to hear a familiar clinking sound. "Let me check your bowl," the merchant said. To his great surprise, he found that the beggar's bowl was made of pure gold. "My dear young man," he said, "why do you waste your time begging? You are a rich man. That bowl of yours is worth at least thirty thousand dollars." We Christians are often like this beggar boy who failed to recognize and appreciate the value of his bowl. We fail to appreciate the infinite worth of the Holy Spirit living within each of us, sharing His gifts and fruits and charisms with us. On this major feast day, we are invited to experience and appreciate the transforming, sanctifying and strengthening presence of the Holy Spirit within us. This is also a day to renew the promises made to God during our Baptism and Confirmation, to profess our Faith, and to practice it.

*"Come Holy Spirit
Make our ears to hear
Make our eyes to see
Make our mouths to speak
Make our hearts to seek
Make our hands to reach out
And touch the world with your love. AMEN."*

[Cardinal Newman was beatified September 19, 2010 by Pope St. John Paul II.]