

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our Scripture readings of the past six weeks gave us inspiring and challenging thoughts, calling us to be Easter people. Easter people are called to go on into the uncertain future trusting that the risen Lord will meet them on their journey, to trust in the mercy of God and to be merciful just as our heavenly father is merciful, to be filled with God's peace and be channels of his peace for the world, to be vigilant and watchful just as the Lord is as our good shepherd, to be fruitful as disciples of Jesus which depends on our connection with Jesus our master, to be joyful in the Lord and be agents of joy for others and to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. .

Today, we celebrate the feast of Pentecost. Jesus had assured his disciples that He would send His gift of the Spirit from the Father to be their comforter and advocate and that this Holy Spirit would do many things for them that they themselves would be unable to do. Just as he had promised, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples and filled them with new spirit and transformed them into a new people with new direction and purpose.

Our first reading today, from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1-11) tells us that the disciples experienced a new courage, a harmony, a unity, and a fellowship that they had never dreamed of! They were from different territories, they were of different backgrounds and they spoke different languages. But they understood each other! The disharmony, the disunity and the brokenness and confusion that people experienced at Babel was reversed...at Babel they began to speak many languages and they could not understand each other anymore...at Pentecost, they spoke different languages and they understood each other...the Holy Spirit brought them into a new kind of relationship that transcended cultural, social and language differences.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples and filled them with new power and courage that transcended their experience and expectations. . They were no longer afraid. Fear had paralyzed these men and they were hiding behind closed doors. The Holy spirit broke through their fears, doubts and anxieties and freed them to proclaim the good news of the resurrection of their master Jesus. They spoke boldly and moved with courage and compassion to bring the good news of Jesus to the world. . Frightened men became fearless and courageous proclaimers of the resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus had promised his disciples to send the Holy Spirit to be their helper and that the Holy Spirit would give them all the gifts they need to complete their mission. The Church's tradition lists seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety

and Fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:1-2). St. Paul gives us a slightly different list of gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Mighty deeds, Prophecy, Discernment of Spirits, Varieties of Tongues and the ability to Interpret them (1 Corinthians 12:1-11). These two men of great wisdom and discernment discovered and described the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their own way. They saw them as means of service, of ministry to the community. They are Gifts for the common good - for the benefit of the community, and not for personal gain or profit.

The list of gifts, as seen above, does not imply that there are no other gifts from the Spirit of God. There are as many gifts as there are people. The list could be seen and understood as inclusive of all gifts that God gives to each of us. We are gifted persons and a gifted Community and gifted Church. We are gifted with the holy Spirit and spirited with His gifts. It is up to us to develop these gifts, share them with others and use them for the service of the Community.

The last of the gifts on the Church's traditional list of gifts is "Fear of the Lord." The "fear of the Lord" should be translated as "the awe" of the Lord or may be a "reverential fear", not the kind of fear that "freezes" a person but the kind of fear that "frees" a person and empowers the person with qualities that would move him/her to fidelity, loyalty, steadfastness, covenant love and to generous service. This is the gift that freed the disciples from their fears and moved them out of their hiding places to go and boldly proclaim the resurrection of Jesus.

We are now living in a world, burdened with all kinds of anxieties, doubts and fears. Nations are at odds with each other. Ideologies, philosophies and theologies seem to keep people apart, even in religious circles. Religion that is supposed to be a binding and unifying force has become a dividing force even in our Catholic Church. Differences in theological positions, liturgical practices, worship forms, rituals, pastoral approaches, spiritual practices, etc. have become sources of conflict and tension rather than resources for the growth of the Church. Our Church is alive and vibrant only when we experience what the early Christians experienced at Pentecost – unity in diversity, communion of cultures, respect for differences and the freedom to be what we are called to be and to witness to our faith in Jesus and his way.

In the Gospel reading of today, we read about Jesus bringing peace to the disciples who were hiding in fear and sending them out to forgive, to heal and to bring harmony and peace to a troubled world (John 20:19-23). It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the courage and freedom to fulfill this mission of Jesus, especially during these difficult and troublesome times. May the Holy Spirit bless us and empower us with freedom, courage and peace that we urgently need at this time in our history.

I encourage you to take a few minutes each day of this week to be still and get in touch with the gifts that the Holy Spirit has poured into your heart. Pray that the Holy spirit continues to bless you with courage to witness to the risen Lord during these trying and troublesome times.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Pentecost Sunday

May 19, 2024

Dear friends, build your house on rock.

Try each day to follow Christ's word.

Listen to him as a true friend with whom you can share your path in life.

With him at your side, you will find courage and hope to face difficulties and problems, and even to overcome disappointments and setbacks.

(Pope Benedict XVI)

Collect

O God, who by the mystery of today's great feast
sanctify your whole Church in every people and nation,
pour out, we pray, the gifts of the Holy Spirit
across the face of the earth
and, with the divine grace that was at work
when the Gospel was first proclaimed,
fill now once more the hearts of believers.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

**Most of us aren't naturally equipped with the virtue of forbearance.
We must be intentional about nurturing this virtue.**

Acts 2:1-11

The disciples experienced a harmony, a unity, and a fellowship that they never dreamed of! They were from different territories, they were of different background, they spoke different languages.... but they understood each other! The disharmony, the disunity and the brokenness

and confusion that people experienced at Babel was reversed...at Babel they began to speak many languages and they could not understand each other anymore...at Pentecost, they spoke different languages and they understood each other...the Holy Spirit made it happen. The Holy Spirit filled the disciples with a new power.... they were no more afraid...they spoke boldly...they moved with courage to bring the good news of Jesus to the world.....

Psalm 104

Psalm 103 ended with “Bless the Lord, all His works...”. Psalm 104 begins giving the reasons, why “my soul” should bless the Lord – because “all his works” do the same thing! All his creation shows forth His glory! God is clothed with “his creation”. God’s creation is pictured as his outer garment. Our Psalmist may have had the story of creation in his mind as he composed this Psalm!

**Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord, my God, you are great indeed!
How manifold are your works, O Lord!
The earth is full of your creatures.....**

I Corinthians 12:3-13

Paul describes the community as one, unified, harmonious body...many parts, many and varied talents, different gifts, different ministries, different culture..... but one unified, harmonious body in the Spirit of Jesus.

John 20:19-23

The disciples are sent out with the same mission of the master! Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world, the disciples are sent with the good news of the father’s forgiving, healing, reconciling, redeeming Grace! “As the Father sent me, so I send you... receive the Holy Spirit.” Jesus was sent into the world to be the light, to heal, to forgive, to reconcile, to bring hope, to bring harmony, to call forth justice, to proclaim the Father’s compassionate presence, to redeem, to take up the cross, to die and to rise again...The disciple are sent just the same way..... “As the father sent me, so I sent you”

What Jesus became for the disciples, the disciples must become for the world....

What Jesus did for the world the disciples must do.....

Today’s Gospel passage says, “He breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit...”

Knowing well the limitations with which his disciples must live and work in the world, Jesus empowered them with his own Spirit.

Jesus had spoken to the disciples much about the Holy Spirit. He said to the disciples: I will ask the Father and He will send you another helper who will stay with you forever (Jn.14:16). The helper, the Holy Spirit will teach you everything and make you remember all I have told you (Jn.14:26). The Spirit will give them courage to stand up and witness to him in the face of difficulties (Jn. 15:26-27). The Spirit will lead them into truth (Jn.16:7-8, 13).

Jesus breathed on them and said: “receive the Holy Spirit’ (Jn. 20:21-22). At Pentecost, the Spirit took “possession” of them (Acts 2:2-3). The Spirit transformed the disciples and Peter who denied knowing Jesus, so that they could go outside and begin preaching and proclaiming Jesus (Acts 2:15-17).

- The Holy Spirit is the Comforter that Jesus sends. The word comforter comes from two words in Latin, “cum fortis”, meaning “with courage”
- The Holy Spirit is the advocate who pleads our cause, who stands beside us and articulates for us what we are unable to articulate.....
- It is the Holy Spirit within us who helps us discern the call of God and empowers us to respond to God’ call.....
- Our witness to Christ is inspired and sustained by the Holy Spirit from within.....
- Our witness comes from long, lasting fellowship and intimacy with Christ. The disciples were witnesses because they have been with him. We can witness Christ only when we have been with him. The spirit brings us into this fellowship with Christ and sustains that relationship.....
- The witness comes from inner conviction, personal conviction. There can be no effective witness without personal conviction. The Spirit empowers, strengthens and sustains our conviction.....
- The witness flows into outward testimony. A Christian witness is a person who not only knows Christ but wants others to know Christ. He is prepared to speak what is in his heart. The Spirit empowers the person to speak the truth that is in the heart.....
- The Spirit gives courage to stand up and witness to him in the face of difficulties.....
- In Scripture, the presence of the Holy Spirit is always an occasion of the return of harmony from chaos, freedom from slavery, rebirth from death.....

Pray that you may experience the Holy Spirit rushing in with gifts that will transform you into “Sons of God”.

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, May 19 - St. Celestine and 17 other saints are remembered this day

According to tradition, Pietro di Morrone was born in 1215 in the town of Sant'Angelo Limosano, in the Kingdom of Sicilia (Sicily). After his father's death he began working in the fields. He became a Benedictine monk at Faifoli in the Diocese of Benevento when he was 17. He showed an extraordinary disposition toward asceticism and solitude, and in 1239 retired to a solitary cavern on the mountain Morrone, hence his name (Peter of Morrone).

Five years later he left this retreat and went with two companions to a similar cave on the even more remote Mountain of Maiella in the Abruzzi region of central Italy, where he lived as strictly as possible according to the example of John the Baptist.

In 1244 he founded the order, which was eventually named after him, the Celestines (the name he took when he became Pope). A new religious community was formed, and Pietro gave them a rule formulated in accordance with his own practices which was eventually approved by Pope Gregory X, making it a branch of the Benedictines and following the rule of Saint Benedict, but adding to it additional severities and privations.

In July 1294, three eminent dignitaries, accompanied by an immense multitude of monks and laymen, ascended the mountain, and announced that Pietro had been chosen as the new Pope by a unanimous vote of the Sacred College and humbly begged him to accept the honor. Such an event has never happened in the history of the Church. Reluctantly accepting this honor, Pietro took the name of Celestine V.

Pope Celestine made many serious mistakes in five short months. Troubled by the many mistakes and his desire for the ascetic and contemplative life, Celestine began to think of resigning as Pope. This had never happened in the history of the Church. On December 13, 1294, Celestine announced his resignation as Pope and proclaimed that the cardinals were free to proceed to a new election.

Celestine was not allowed to become a hermit once again. The new Pope Boniface VIII imprisoned him in the castle of Fumone near Ferentino in Lazio, attended by two monks of his order, where Pietro died on May 19, 1296.

Celestine is a saint who will always be remembered for the unique manner in which he was elected Pope, for his spectacular incompetence in that office, and for the distinction of being the first pontiff ever to have resigned.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Dreams will remain mere dreams
if they are not followed up with determination, patience,
and persistence and above all Hope!**

