

Happy Birthday Mother Church! Today we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles during the Hebrew Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem. There wasn't anything subtle about this first Christian Pentecost. The sound like roaring wind, tongues of fire, huge crowds, the Church opened her doors to receive the faithful with a bang.

This is the day when Saint Peter, the Rock upon whom Jesus built this Church, gave his first sermon. Depending on how you count, within the crowd between 10 and 13 different languages were spoken by the people, but all of them understood Peter. 3,000 were baptized into the Church on that day.

At the tower of Babel, God punished King Nimrod for his hubris thinking he could build a tower to reach God by inflicting different languages on the workers and scattering them to the four winds. At this first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit infuses the Apostles, and the people listening with grace allowing them to understand and for those who were willing, receive the good news, the message of salvation.

Peter and the other Apostles didn't speak in 13 different languages; they spoke in their native tongue. The Grace of the Holy Spirit enabled all present to understand. And this brings us to the crux of the matter, understanding. I have spoken about this before, We, people, usually act in our own self-interest. The issue is in determining where our own self-interest resides. Is it in worldly wealth? Having a date for the party next week? Is it in chasing rank or position? Or just maybe, it resides in something else, something greater.

The Holy Spirit is the one who gently leads us to understanding that our own best self-interest resides in Jesus, in loving one another and in obeying God's law. A position that is counter-intuitive in today's culture, and the pressure and allure of our culture is hard to beat; in fact we can't win this personal spiritual battle on our own. We need help from the Holy Spirit.

Look around the naïve, every one here has friends and family members who at one time attended mass faithfully every week, but they aren't here any more. Why is that? I believe that the scandals are just an excuse for actions that were already being contemplated or taken. We have become

so busy that our priorities have become wopperjawed. Society teaches us to live for self, work, pleasure, and maybe family.

But the Holy Spirit has a different set of priorities. God first, then family, then work. We live to spend eternity with God, we share the gift of life, a gift that comes from God with our spouse and in due course create new life in conjunction with God. We work to live, we don't live to work and the work that we do, if it is making the perfect potato chip or defending our Nation must contribute to the betterment of society and uphold our dignity and the dignity of our fellow man.

The Holy Spirit can be seen as the unsung hero of the Holy Trinity. The Father is the most visible in writings of the Old Testament, the Son, Jesus is the most visible in the writings of the New Testament. But where is the Holy Spirit? In the second verse of the first chapter of Genesis we read of the "mighty wind" that "swept over the waters". That wind, that life giving Spirit was, is the Holy Spirit.

As Jesus was finishing his time with the Apostles after the Resurrection, he spoke of the Holy Spirit as the one who was to come, the Paraclete, the advocate, the helper, the one who would help them to understand all that he had told them. The Holy Spirit has always been present as we come back the importance of understanding.

Just what does the Holy Spirit do in this the time after the first Christian Pentecost? Theologians who are much smarter than I am have been seeking to understand his role and parsing his gifts and fruits throughout the history of the Church.

All of that information is in the Catechism. It is brilliant, easy to understand, and great for the classroom. But here, now, lets talk about my experience of the Holy Spirit in my life. Not because my experience is special, but because I want you to recognize the influence of the Holy Spirit in your life through my story.

The reason that we can love and know love is only through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Those of us in the vocation of Marriage, Fr. Gaul in his vocation of the Priesthood, we are all sustained in the love of our vocation, of our spouse through the Holy Spirit. In my own life, it took the love of my wife to teach me the love of God. How can that be anything other than a gift from the Holy Spirit?

Recognizing the need to reconcile, person to person and in the sacrament with God comes from the Holy Spirit. The ability to believe in God, to have and sustain hope, to give of ourselves to someone else comes from the Holy Spirit. The self discipline required to lead a good, fruitful, and holy life comes from the Holy Spirit.

So many gifts and we just don't pay any attention; we succumb to the temptations of our culture and we fail to take advantage of the gifts, the understanding of what is truly important offered by the Holy Spirit. The understanding that will lead us to act in what is our own best, enlightened self interest, the actions that lead us to spend eternity in heaven with the Holy Spirit, Jesus, the Father, Blessed Virgin Mary and all of the Saints.

Take a moment every day and look for the gift that the Holy Spirit has given to you, radiate the joy that gives to you and these empty spaces in the pews will fill back up because people will want what you have.