

## Sent on Mission

### Homily for Pentecost Sunday 2017

Baptism is the Sacrament that makes us members of the Church. On this Pentecost Sunday we are going to think about our baptism in relation to the Gift of the Holy Spirit. To be people who have been made members of the Body of Christ through Baptism is very important in understanding who we are. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in 2008 explained our baptism this way when he said:

*Our life now belongs to Christ, and no longer to ourselves. At his side and, indeed, drawn up in his love, we are freed from fear. He enfolds us and carries us wherever we may go, he who is Life itself"*

For those who truly appropriate their baptismal life we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to live this way, truly belonging to Christ. This is something that is clearly evident in the example of the earliest Christian community. Before Pentecost we read in the Gospels that Peter and the apostolic band were often fearful. But now in the wake of Pentecost they are a different people. Fear gives way to courage and the scattering that was evident on Maundy Thursday gives way to a new found unity because the Apostles now experienced this enfolding, knowing what it was to now be carried and empowered by the Lord. This is one of the clearest discoveries made by people who come to profess Jesus as their Lord. As they enter into a relationship of intimacy with Jesus they also discover that they are now part of his body, all interdependent on one another.

This is made very clear in the reading from Acts where we are told:

***WHEN THE DAY OF PENTECOST HAD COME, they were all together in one place***

This means not only where they in the same place, the Cenacle or Upper Room where the Last Supper was celebrated. But they were also of one accord – that is they had a common purpose and mission which was to tell of the mighty works of God. That is, they witnessed by their lives to what it meant for them to proclaim Jesus is Lord.

As Catholic Christians we also express this coming together in one place concretely. Someone told me a that a friend had sent him an email from another city. He ended the email by saying: "See you at the Mass". Now he was not going to be at my friend's parish. He lived far away from Ken. What he meant was that when we go to Mass we are at the same Mass. We are altogether in one place just like the Apostles gathered with Mary in the Upper Room. And just like they were empowered from that place to tell of the mighty works of God the same is true for us. When we attend the Mass expectantly and with commitment and whole hearted devotion it does become the source and summit of our own lives so that we can live with the same purposeful Pentecostal passion that we read of in Acts 2. This is what it means to live our baptism.

So let's think a little bit more about how baptism is tied to Pentecost. The Feast of Pentecost was for the Jewish People one of three key festivals in their sacred calendar. At that feast the people celebrated the first fruits of the harvest – a harvest that anticipated a far greater harvest that would await them later in the year. The Christians took this feast and gave it a spiritual application. For those who are in Christ Jesus and empowered by his Holy Spirit our lives express the first fruits of a spiritual harvest. Our lives in the present are characterized by those Christ like qualities that will - when we enter into the fullness of heaven - reap an abundant harvest. This is why Pentecost is so important. For in this feast we understand that just as the ground and the crops need the proper nutrients in order to thrive, so too for us spiritually. As we live a life connected to Jesus and have our souls infused with the presence of the Holy Spirit we become spiritually healthy.

In Acts we read that it is those who are joined to Christ and one another who can then experience a kind of unity that strengthens and makes whole. That is what is so significant about the apostles declaring the praises of God in different languages and yet everyone able to understand in their own native tongue. Here was a community that was integrated and united. Here were people, only 120, who were empowered from that very room where the Eucharist was instituted to go forth into the world – sent by Jesus on the same Mission that the Father had sent him on.

As he said to the Apostles in today's Gospel: "As the Father sent me, so I send you". he says the same to us. The word Apostle means "one who is sent". The last words at Mass in Latin are: "Ite, missa est" which literally means "Go, it has been sent." Pope Emeritus Benedict in his In his Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, discussed the development of missa from meaning "dismissed" to meaning one's "mission." "In antiquity," the Holy Father writes, "missa simply meant 'dismissal.' However in Christian usage it gradually took on a deeper meaning. The word 'dismissal' has come to imply a 'mission.'"

The word Mass is derived from this word missa or mission. Therefore it is from the Upper Room that the Mission of the Church originated had has been carried on ever since.

Pentecost calls us and empowers is to live in genuine and caring community where we relate to each other as a healthy body. St Paul puts it like this in today's Epistle:

***For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body,***

Pentecost enabled for that unity within diversity to find expression in Jerusalem - as the speaking in tongues so vividly represents. For us it is this very unity within diversity that is celebrated in the Catholic Church, most especially at the Mass. For think about how on this day all around the world Mass is celebrated in even more languages than were spoken on that first Pentecost. The Church formed on that day, anticipated the universal Church that has gone out into all the world. The Mass we celebrate is an extension of that first Mass said in the very place where the Holy Spirit then fell 54 days later.

We are gathered together in one place and of one accord. As we gather around the Altar of the Lord we are to remember that because we belong to Christ and are empowered by Holy Spirit we can be an authentic community that is truly Pentecostal. What does such a community look like? It is a spiritual body formed by Christ in baptism and empowered by the Holy Spirit in Confirmation bearing in the present the fruit of Spiritual Grace and will one day reap a full harvest.

And while the Church is universal it is also local. For us that means St. Peter's in Silver Springs. It is here that we have been called by Jesus to live out our Pentecostal life, Here the seeds of grace are germinating and forming a community that is committed to furthering the Mission of the Church that was born in Jerusalem over 2000 years ago.

It is because of this Mission that we at St. Peter's have been called into being. It is because of this Mission that we have invested financially to upgrade to our physical structures. It is because of this Mission that we are called to invest together in the ongoing work of St. Peter's. Part of this investment is financial. Therefore Father Jerome and I are so grateful for everyone who has been able to contribute to the Building our Faith Campaign. For those who have not yet committed to this work, I want to invite you to prayerfully choose to partner with us in this part of our local mission. The more people invest with us in this will ensure that we can pay off the 4.5 Million dollars responsibly and incurring less debt because of a reduced amortization.

It is not often that we make a direct financial appeal in the homily. But today on the Birthday of the Church it is timely and appropriate. I invite and call more within our St. Peter's parish to express your commitment to the Lord, His Mission and your Baptism by pledging to the Campaign.

St. Peter's we have a Mission that originated in the Upper Room and continues to this day. Jesus is sending us and using us so that here the first fruits of the spiritual harvest can be nurtured and tended with care.