

MAY 23, 2021
Pentecost Sunday
John 15: 26-27; 16: 12-15

“MAY THE HOLY SPIRIT BE WITH YOU!”

“Derek Redmond ran in a semi-final of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. Halfway round the track this British athlete collapsed with a torn hamstring. For some strange reason, he wanted to finish the race, and he struggled to his feet. Derek’s Dad got up out of the stand, and he broke his way through security. His Dad picked up his crying son, and together they finished the race. — That man did what the Holy Spirit does for us. It’s when we are spiritually exhausted, when we find ourselves giving into the spirit of slavery again and again, when we can’t pray, when we don’t want to pray, when our Faith is just not strong enough – when there is no way we can finish the race — that is when the Spirit picks us up and drags us to the finish line.”¹

Today we are celebrating the Pentecost, the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, and traditionally called the ‘birthday’ of the Church. This is the completion of the celebration of the Paschal Mystery: the Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension of our Lord and Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit on His disciples.

“Most of us are more familiar with the account given in the Acts of the Apostles which is the First Reading of today’s Mass. In this account, the apostles are all gathered in one room at the time of the Jewish feast of Pentecost, which in the Jewish calendar traditionally falls 50 days after the Passover (or Easter in our Christian calendar). What follows is a scene filled with scriptural symbols. First, there is the sound of a mighty wind from heaven filling the whole house. The word in Greek for ‘spirit’ and ‘wind’ is the same, so the wind clearly indicates the Spirit of God. Then there appeared tongues of fire which rested on the head of each one present. Again we have a symbol of God’s presence. We

¹ www.stories4homilies.co

remember Moses speaking to God out of the bush which was on fire. We remember that, as the Israelites wandered through the desert, they were accompanied during the night by a pillar of fire – God was with them. All present are then filled with the Spirit. The sign of this presence is their ability to speak in different languages. Immediately, the apostles go out and begin to speak to the crowds of people. Jerusalem is filled with Jewish and convert visitors from all over the Mediterranean, from Asia Minor, Egypt and North Africa, even Rome, to celebrate the feast. These people are amazed to hear men, who are clearly relatively unlettered people from the province of Galilee, speaking to them in so many languages. The meaning is clear. What the apostles are preaching is a message destined for the whole world and not just for one people.”²

My brothers and sister, Jesus was anointed with the same Holy Spirit at His baptism, the beginning of His ministry, so the disciples and followers of Him also needed the Holy Spirit to carry out the mission entrusted to them. This particular command was given to them before He left the earth, during His Ascension: “Go into all the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation.”³ The Holy Spirit through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation gave us a life of love, peace, joy, and righteousness. The Spirit also gives us the strength and courage to live as faithful and courageous disciples of Jesus, instructs us in the works and ways of God, guides us to do God's will, and through the Sevenfold Gifts of the Holy Spirit - wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord, we can be filled with holiness. Let us ask in this Eucharist that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that we may boldly proclaim the Good News of salvation to all people. Even if your husband, wife or relatives and friends are lukewarm, against what you believe in, and sometimes deter you from proclaiming God's goodness and love, don't be discouraged and abandon your faith, the Holy Spirit will

² livingspace.sacredspace.ie

³ Mark 16: 15 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

strengthen you and give you what you needed for you to be proclaimers, the mouth and the face of God. Let us also reflect of our own role and responsibilities in the Church and fearlessly be part of the mission entrusted to us.

There's a story of two brothers "living on adjoining farms who developed a bitter conflict. It began with a small misunderstanding that grew into a major difference, and exploded into bitter exchange of words. They stopped talking to each other as well as visiting each other. One day a man came knocking at the door of John the elder brother. It was a carpenter looking for a day's work. John said, "Look across the creek at that farm. Once there was a meadow between our farms but my brother bulldozed it and now there stands a creek between us. Well, he might have done it to spite me. But I got the better of him. I have a pile of lumber in my barn and I want you to build an 8-foot tall fence so I don't have to look at his place anymore. Okay?" Meanwhile, John needed to go to town for supplies. When he returned he stood horrified because there was no fence but a bridge. And to his amazement his younger brother came across the bridge with arms outstretched. The two brothers embraced one another. Sometimes we need a third person to reconcile us. No wonder Jesus sent his Spirit to us to do that job. Peace and forgiveness are the two signs of a transformed people. Pentecost is the right time to renew our commitment to peace and forgiveness."⁴

Let this be our prayer: "My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit and for the new life the Holy Spirit offers to me. May the Holy Spirit put my heart burning with the fire of Your bountiful and forgiving love that I may share and live the joy and freedom with You and with my brothers and sisters. Amen."

⁴ www.stories4homilies.co