

PENTECOST SUNDAY – YEAR A

“I will not leave you orphaned” (John 14:18)

‘Today we are celebrating the great Solemnity of Pentecost. If, in a certain sense, all the liturgical solemnities of the Church are important, Pentecost is uniquely so. This is because, having reached the 50th day, it marks the fulfilment of the event of the Passover, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus through the gift of the Spirit of the Risen One.’ ⁽¹⁾

‘When the work which the Father had given the Son to do on earth was accomplished (cf. Jn 17:4,) the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that he might continually sanctify the Church.’ (Eph 2:18)⁽²⁾ ‘The era of the Church began with the coming... of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, together with Mary, the Lord's Mother.’ (Acts 1:14)⁽³⁾ ‘Doubtless, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified. Yet on the day of Pentecost... the Church was publicly revealed to the multitude, and the Gospel began to spread among the nations by means of preaching,’⁽⁴⁾ “they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.” (Acts 4:31)

The Spirit however does not act in isolation. The unity shared by the Blessed Trinity is such that each Person indwells the other two ‘ the Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son.’⁽⁵⁾ For this reason Jesus teaches: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears... He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (Jn 16:13-15)

Reflecting on the readings for today's Solemnity, Pope Saint John Paul II teaches, 'This event constitutes the definitive manifestation of what had already been accomplished in the same Upper Room on Easter Sunday. The Risen Christ came and "brought" to the Apostles the Holy Spirit. He gave him to them, saying "Receive the Holy Spirit." What had then taken place inside the Upper Room, "the doors being shut," later, on the day of Pentecost is manifested also outside, in public... in order to bear witness to Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.'⁽⁶⁾

In this way the words of Jesus are fulfilled: "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning." (Jn 15:26-27)

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had taught his disciples that, 'He would take on a new Body. It would not be physical like the one He took from Mary. That Body is now glorified at the right hand of the Father...Rather, it would be His new social Body that would be bound to Him by His Heavenly Spirit which He would send on leaving this earth,'⁽⁷⁾ for, 'Just as the Son of God took upon Himself a human nature from the womb of Mary, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, so on Pentecost He took a Mystical Body from the womb of humanity, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit.'⁽⁸⁾ The Church 'is the body; the individual members her limbs. Thus, each is a member of the other, each the other's strength and aid (Rom. 12; I Cor. 12; Col. 4) What harms the one, harms all; what helps the one, furthers all, and each has a share in the other,'⁽⁹⁾ "as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body." (1 Cor 12:12-13) 'As cells in a body form a new human life when God breathes a soul into the embryo, so the Apostles appeared as the visible Body of Christ when the Holy Spirit came to make them one.'⁽¹⁰⁾

'The mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit is brought to completion in the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. This joint mission henceforth brings Christ's faithful to share in his communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit prepares men

and goes out to them with his grace, in order to draw them to Christ. The Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls his word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of his death and Resurrection. He makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, to bring them into communion with God,⁽¹¹⁾ In this way, 'the Spirit works in human history as, "another Counselor," permanently ensuring the transmission and spreading of the Good News revealed by Jesus of Nazareth.'⁽¹²⁾ 'Because the Holy Spirit is the anointing of Christ, it is Christ who, as the head of the Body, pours out the Spirit among his members to nourish, heal, and organise them in their mutual functions, to give them life, send them to bear witness, and associate them to his self-offering to the Father and to his intercession for the whole world. Through the Church's sacraments, Christ communicates his Holy and sanctifying Spirit to the members of his Body.'⁽¹³⁾

In this way we see realised the Lord's words to his disciples: "I go away, and I am coming to you." (Jn 14:28)

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus who sits, "at the right of the Father," (Rom 8:34) 'is continually with us—behind every event, in the heart of every believer, in the core of collective faith, his Church. He is everywhere as power, guidance, union.'⁽¹⁴⁾ 'In the soul of each baptised person, Christ resides, living and ruling. From there he founds the new existence of the believer; from there he penetrates, saturates, renews him; directing his deeds and his destiny.'⁽¹⁵⁾ In this way the Lord fulfils the promise he made to his disciples: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:20)

What began on the day of Pentecost will endure until Christ returns to us in glory, for 'the Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple' (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19)⁽¹⁶⁾ 'This new coming of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, and his constant presence and action in the spiritual life are accomplished in the sacramental reality. In this reality, Christ, who has gone away in his visible humanity, comes, is present and acts in the Church in such an intimate way as to make it his own Body.'⁽¹⁷⁾

The Lord's abiding presence, first communicated to us by the Apostles, is perpetuated in the life of the Church through Apostolic Succession, 'the Apostles were the first budding - forth of the New Israel, and at the same time the beginning of the sacred hierarchy,'⁽¹⁸⁾ As our Gospel makes clear, having breathed the Holy Spirit into the Apostles, the Risen Lord commissioned them first to the ministry of mercy through the forgiveness of sin 'Because we are dead or at least wounded through sin, the first effect of the gift of love is the forgiveness of our sins. The communion of the Holy Spirit in the Church restores to the baptised the divine likeness lost through sin,'⁽¹⁹⁾ 'God is Love and love is his first gift, containing all others. God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.'⁽²⁰⁾

Their descendants in the Apostolic ministry 'The bishops ... by the Sacrament of Orders render the sacred ministers sharers in this spiritual gift and, through the Sacrament of Confirmation, ensure that all who are reborn of water and the Holy Spirit are strengthened by this gift. And thus, in a certain way, the grace of Pentecost is perpetuated in the Church.'⁽²¹⁾ 'Thus the Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity.'⁽²²⁾ In this way will be fulfilled the words of the psalm 'When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.' (Psalm 104:30)

So, on this Pentecost Sunday let us call anew on the Lord's name:

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come,
From thy bright heav'nly throne,
Come take possession of our souls,
And make them all thy own.

Thou who art called the Paraclete,
Best gift of God above,
The living spring, the living fire,
Sweet unction and true love.

Thou who art sevenfold in thy grace,
Finger of God's right hand
His promise teaching little ones
To speak an understand.

O guide our minds with thy blessed light,
With love our hearts inflame;
And with thy strength, which never decays
Confirm our mortal frame.

Far from us drive our deadly foe;
True peach unto us bring;
And through all perils lead us safe
Beneath thy sacred wing.

Through thee may we the Father know,
Through thee the eternal Son,
And thee, the Spirit of them both,
Thrice-blessed Three in One.

All glory to the Father be,
With his coequal Son;
The same to thee, great Paraclete,
While endless ages run.

Amen.

- (1) Benedict XVI, The Solemnity of Pentecost, 2011
- (2) Lumen Gentium, 1964, n. 4.
- (3) John Paul II, Dominum et Vivificantem, 1986, No.25
- (4) Ad Gentes: On the Mission Activity of the Church, 1965, No.4
- (5) Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 234
- (6) John Paul II, Dominum et Vivificantem, 1986, No.25
- (7) Fulton J. Sheen, 2019, The Life of Christ, loc.650
- (8) Fulton J. Sheen, 2019, The Life of Christ, loc.653
- (9) Romano Guardini, The Lord, 1954, loc.592-593
- (10) Fulton J. Sheen, 2019, The Life of Christ, loc.653
- (11) Catechism of the Catholic Church, No.737
- (12) J.P.II, Dominum et Vivificantum, No.7
- (13) Catechism of the Catholic Church, No.739
- (14) Romano Guardini, The Lord, 1987, loc. 588
- (15) Romano Guardini, The Lord, 1987, loc. 589
- (16) Lumen Gentium, 1964, n.4.
- (17) John Paul II, Dominum et Vivificantem, 1986, No.61
- (18) Ad Gentes: On the Missionary activity of the Church, 1965, No.5
- (19) Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 734
- (20) Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 733
- (21) John Paul II, Dominum et Vivificantem, 1986, No.25
- (22) Catechism of the Catholic Church, No.738