

THE SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

THE SEVENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

Sun. **THE SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S COMING**
May 20 **LIVING IN THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT**
A reflection taken from a homily by St. Aelred of Rievaulx

Mon. **Monday of the Seventh Week of Ordinary Time**
21 **DAILY TRUST IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE**
A reflection taken from a homily by Bl. Guerric of Igny

Tues. **Tuesday of the Seventh Week in Ordinary Time**
22 **WE ARE ALL CALLED TO BE EVANGELISTS**
A reflection from Evangelii Nuntiandi by Bl. Pope Paul VI

Wed. **Wednesday of the Seventh Week of Ordinary Time**
23 **WE ARE SANCTIFIED TO CARRY OUT A MISSION**
A reflection from The Mystery of Jesus by Fr. P. Bernard

Thurs. **Thursday of the Seventh Week of Ordinary Time**
24 **PENTECOST & THE CHURCH'S UNITY**
A reflection developed from a sixth century sermon

Fri. **The Memorial of St. Bede the Venerable**
25 **KNOWING GOD IN THE SPIRIT**
Developed from a homily by St. Bede the Venerable

Sat. **The Memorial of Our Lady**
26 **MARY AND THE HEARING OF OUR FEARS**
Developed from Journeying with the Lord by
Carlo Cardinal Martini

LIVING IN THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

A reflection taken from a homily by St. Aelred of Rievaulx

The Holy Solemnity of the Spirit puts new heart into us. Not only do we experience the gift of the dignity of God's own children but we experience delight. On this feast it is love that we specially honor. Among human beings there is no word more pleasant to hear and no thought more delightful to dwell on than love. The love that we celebrate is nothing other than the goodness, kindness, and charity of God. God is personally goodness, kindness and charity. God's goodness, moreover, is identical with the Spirit, with God's very self.

In disposing all things, the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world from the beginning. The Spirit reaches from one end to the other of the world and delicately disposes everything to receive God's gifts. As sanctifier the Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world. In a special way this was re-begun at Pentecost. On this day the gracious Spirit was itself sent by the Heavenly Father and the Only Son on a new mission, in a new way, and through a new manifestation of mighty power. The sending was for the sanctification of every creature. Before Jesus was glorified the Spirit had not been given, but today the Spirit came forth from the Heavenly Throne to give God's self in endlessly abundant richness to the human race. It was a divine outpouring that is to pervade the whole, wide world and be manifest in myriad spiritual endowments.

Where could such an overflowing of delight come from if not from heaven? Not many days previously heaven received from earth a fruit of wonderful sweetness and beauty. Did our land ever yield a fruit more pleasant than the Lord Jesus? He is sweeter, more pleasant, holier and most delectable. Indeed, faithfulness has sprung up from the earth! A few days ago, we sent Christ on ahead of us to the Heavenly Kingdom so we might have in return all that Heaven held that would be sweet to our longing.

The full sweetness of earth is Christ's humanity. The full sweetness of Heaven is Christ's Spirit. Christ's humanity ascended from us to heaven and Christ's Spirit has come down upon us. Now indeed does the Spirit of the Lord fill the whole world. All creation recognizes his voice. Everywhere the Spirit is at work, everywhere the Spirit speaks. The Lord said, "Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive anyone's sins they are forgiven". But before the day of Pentecost the Spirit's voice was, in a sense, still unheard. His power has not yet leaped forth, nor had the disciples come to know the Spirit truly. They were still in the grip of fear, cowering behind closed doors.

From Pentecost day onward, the voice of the Lord has resounded. The God of majesty has thundered and made his voice heard. The voice of the Lord strikes flaming fire, the voice of the Lord shakes the desert and stirs the wilderness, the voice of the Lord strips the forest bare and all cry glory. How do we join our voices to the Lord's? We cry out, as the Lord Jesus did from the cross, with words of mercy and love. That is what our lives must cry out each day and hour that we live. Glory to God forever!

DAILY TRUST IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE

A reflection taken from a sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny

“Father, while I was with them I kept them in your name.” This was the Lord’s prayer on the eve of his passion. Does it imply that the Lord will withdraw his care when he has ascended and sent the Spirit as his own “paraclete”? Of course not. The name “paraclete” means “comforter at one’s side”. The Lord is with us always, especially after the Coming of the Spirit. He who in Heaven directs and governs the hosts of angels has chosen a small group to be his associates and representatives on earth. The Lord instructed them in person until the time when their hearts were sufficiently opened to be led by the Spirit. Christ loved these little ones with a love worthy of his greatness. Having called them away from secular pursuits and ambitions, they now rely on him alone.

But when the moment had come to leave the disciples, He was overwhelmed by the depth of his affection for them and unable to disguise his overflowing tenderness. Hence the Evangelist’s words: ***“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”*** He laid bare the strength of his love for his friends before pouring himself out like water for them and also gave to them the sacrament of his Body and Blood.

It is difficult to say which is more wonderful, the power of his love in devising this new means for remaining with them, or his longing to console them. In spite of withdrawing his bodily presence he remained not only with them but in them. That is the power of this sacrament. He prayed, ***“Father, while I was with them in the world I kept them in your name and none is lost except the one destined to be lost. And now I am coming to you, so keep those you have given me in your Name.”*** The whole of his prayer can be summarized under three heads. First, that the disciples are to be kept from evil. Second, that they are to be sanctified in the truth. Third, that they are to be glorified with Him. ***“Father, I long that those you have given me be with me where I am.”***

And he promised them that the Spirit should be for them and see that his prayer would be fulfilled. Just what he has himself been for them so would the Spirit be. Happy are those who have the Spirit as their advocate, pleasing for them always. Yes, the Spirit must be adored with as much honor and love as the one to whom he prays on our behalf. The Father will not refuse him, even as he didn’t refuse the Only Son. The Spirit shares with Father and Son the single will and power that is God’s alone.

All is bound to be accomplished that is requested by Christ and the Spirit. Their word is all-powerful. Their will is wholly efficacious. We know that God spoke and everything came to exist; God spoke, and it was done, commanded and all existed. And Jesus has prayed: ***“I desire that where I am, they too may be!”*** What a certainty believers have! It is not a certain only for apostles or their companions. It is for all those who believe through their word. That is Jesus’ own prayer. Be assured and certain. The Spirit is caring for you.

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO BE EVANGELISTS

A reflection taken from Evangelii Nuntiandi by Bl. Pope Paul VI

Only after the descent of the Spirit did the apostles set out for the ends of the earth to begin the great task of evangelizing. This was interpreted by St. Peter as a fulfillment of a prophesy by Joel: “*I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh*”. Peter had been empowered by the Spirit to proclaim publicly that Jesus is the Son of God. In the same way Paul was filled with the Spirit before he embarked on his ministry. Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, was chosen for ministry and later bore witness by his own blood. The Spirit fell upon all who accepted God’s word.

The Church grows by being filled with the consoling presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the principle of its life. The Spirit enables believers to understand the mystery of Christ and his teaching. As the Spirit was active in the initial stages of the Church so it is now at work in each and every person who proclaims the gospel message and is open to its guidance. The Spirit disposes the hearts of hearers to accept this message.

There are many techniques for evangelizing, but even the best is no substitute for the hidden working of the Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit no amount of study or preparation is of any avail. The clearest reasoning is powerless to persuade the human heart, unless the Spirit prompts it. It doesn’t matter what science or discipline one argues from, only the power of the Spirit produces results.

That the present time is a privileged moment of the Spirit for the Church is a fact we are very conscious of today. Everywhere believers seek to understand the Spirit revealed in the Scriptures. Unfurling their sails to catch the Spirit’s breath, many gladly entrust themselves to the Spirit’s guidance. People gather together in large numbers to pray and give themselves as agents of the Spirit. The influence of the Spirit is paramount. It was no mere chance that the first steps in preaching the gospel were taken on Pentecost.

All this makes it easy to see that the initiative of spreading the Gospel comes from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit prompts the proclamation and opens the hearts of hearers to understand and accept the word of salvation. The Spirit can even be called the goal of evangelization. That is because the Spirit brings the New Creation into being. The Spirit alone fashions the New Humanity that all evangelization aims at—that unity in diversity which the Gospel necessarily calls forth. It is due to the Spirit that the gospel message permeates the world. The Spirit alone enables evangelists to read the God-given signs of the times and explain their concrete significance in given circumstances. We are all called to participate in this great endeavor; we have all received the Spirit. Let the Spirit guide you to recognize how to do your part! If you can love as Christ loves then you can be a Spirit-guided evangelist whatever your life may be like.

WE ARE SANCTIFIED TO CARRY OUT A MISSION

A reflection from The Mystery of Jesus by Fr. P. Bernard

It was Jesus' preoccupation through the time of his ministry that the disciples be kept in the Divine Name and prepared for the mission God had called them to. This says a great deal about the concerns of the Man-God but also concerning God's Plan of Salvation. Christ never ceased to envelop those he had chosen in the protection of God. But notice that he did not protect them from drinking the cup which God had given him to drink. The protection had more to do with their holiness, their sanctification, than what people thought of as ordinary well-being.

In making the divine presence their protection Christ revealed the Providence of God for them. He says to the Heavenly Father that he has watched over them so that none would be lost except Judas. But he went on to say that now he was returning to the Father and then placing in the Father's hands that care the Father may think best for them. He doesn't say it explicitly but he says it will be an advantage to have the Spirit, which can come only when he returns to the Father.

Notice that Jesus doesn't pray that his disciples be taken out of their own environment. They have to be present in the world to fulfill the mission that the Father is giving them. It is the same mission given to Jesus. What he asks is that they be preserved from the evil that reigns in the world. Their role is to oppose that evil, to be a salt that prevents corruption, and to work as a light that shines in darkness. He is thinking not of evil in the abstract but of "The Evil One", the prince of this world, the devil who presides over the evil which is in the world. God's Plan is to destroy corruption and replace it with sanctification. Those who receive his mission receive a call to realize sanctification! They begin with their own sanctification and find a way to make it a proclamation of God's love.

In John's Gospel we hear more of evil works than even of the Evil One who stirs them up. The preservation of the disciples represents only the negative side of the work of sanctifying that Jesus asks of them. The positive side is their consecration to God's work. To sanctify is to consecrate. Jesus prays that the Father sanctify the disciples in the truth. 'Truth' designates what is most important and it can even be a divine name. Jesus is praying that his disciple be thoroughly transformed in the revelation and possession of God, the truth.

The revelation comes from The Father and is the Father's Word. To receive it places them in the truth that is God, and from that derives their consecration. One whose attention is fixed on God will learn how to live in God and for God. That is what we are consecrated to do. It is the grace Jesus wishes for disciples. Their sanctification, modelled on that of Jesus, prepares them for their mission, and this too is modelled on that of Jesus. The primary mission is to be like Jesus!

PENTECOST & THE CHURCH'S UNITY

A reflection taken from a sixth century sermon

At Pentecost the disciples spoke in the language of every nation. God did this by the presence and gift of Holy Spirit. The Spirit is God's love and whoever has received the Spirit is able to speak in the language of universal love. It is this that inspires people to learn many languages in order to be able to proclaim love's message to all. This Spirit is God's love poured out in our hearts so that it may be poured out in all human hearts. It is love that has brought the Church of God together as one fellowship all over the world.

Just as this love enabled men and women who received it to speak the word of God's love to every people, so today's Church, united and guided by that Spirit of love, has learned to speak in the languages of all peoples. If somebody should say to one of us, "You have received the Holy Spirit, why don't you speak in tongues?", then your reply should be, "I do indeed speak in the tongues of all the world because I belong to the Body of Christ that is the Church and she speaks in all languages". But it was love that make her capable of this. What else did the presence of the Holy Spirit indicate at Pentecost?

The Lord had said, "*No one puts new wine into old wineskins; new wine is put into fresh skins and so both are preserved*". We are new wineskins. That is because we live a new kind of love. We keep Christ's New Commandment and love everyone as he has loved us. So, when the disciples were heard speaking in all kinds of tongues, it was not far wrong to say, "They have been drinking too much new wine". The truth is that the disciples had been filled with divine love by the Holy Spirit and had a message all could understand. The grace of the Spirit filled the with this new wine and to preserve it they were made new wineskins.

Love is not content with itself. It is fervor and reaching out. This fervor brimmed over in the apostles and they spoke in every tongue the message of God's universal love. By this marvel they became signs of the Universal Church and its embrace of every nation. We keep this feast as members of the one Body of Christ. Pentecost is no empty festival for us if we really live what this day celebrates. You are members of that Church which the Lord acknowledges as his own, and it acknowledges him as Lord. He fills the Church with the Holy Spirit so that she never loses sight of the love that enables her to spread throughout the world. He is a bridegroom who never loses sight of his bride. No one could ever deceive him by substituting some other group. He knows us by our love.

To you who come from all nations, who make up the Church of Christ and are members of Christ, the apostle Paul addresses these words: "*Bear with one another in love; do all you and to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*". Notice what is said about love. Notice how it is joined to his words about our hope for unity. He basis his words on the love which brings people together in peace. We are living stones and our master builder is almighty God. It is God's delight to dwell in us as forming this holy community. Take care, then, that nothing ever destroys the unity that binds us all together in Christ

KNOWING GOD IN THE SPIRIT

A reflection taken from a homily by St. Bede the Venerable

The evangelists in the Gospels make clear that all grace and truth come through Jesus Christ. They add: "*No one has ever seen God; the Only-Begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father has told us about God*". No greater grace and no higher truth can be given to human beings. This is repeated in many ways. For instance, Jesus declares "*Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God*". But notice how the emphasis varies: "*Now this is eternal life, that they recognize you, the one, true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*". It seems, however, that seeing God belongs only to the next world since we are also told: "*No one has ever seen God*" and Moses was told "*no one sees my face and lives*". And in the Letter to Timothy it is said, "*no human being has seen or can see*" God.

What the patriarchs and prophets saw was a vision or an image and not God directly. The holy ones saw God through a subordinate creature, for instance, through fire or an angel or a cloud or lightning. Those who are still within the weak vessel of human flesh can see God through circumscribed images of created things but are in no way capable of looking at his uncircumscribed radiance as it is in eternity.

Yet the evangelists speak about the longing to come to the vision of the unchangeable and eternal radiance and add that, "*The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, has told us about God*". The Lord seems to reinforce this in saying, "*no one comes to the Father except through me*" and "*no one knows the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him*". By the guidance of the Son we are to know God. And the key to this is the Spirit, the gift of the Father to the Son and of the Father and Son to us.

By imbuing us with the sacraments of his incarnation and sanctifying us by the charismatic gifts of the Spirit, he makes us capable of coming to what we so long for. So, we hear how the faithful are to hasten to contemplation and by what actions they are to come to God. It isn't only that the Son will declare God, or manifest to human beings the glory of the Holy and indivisible Trinity after the resurrection. Notice what Jesus says, "*One who loves me is loved by the Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him*". Remember that he has said, "*One who sees me sees the Father*". This is because the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son and because to "see" God is to share God's life. God is love and share God's life is to share God's love as shown us through the Son. You have received the Spirit who is God and is God's love. So, you have God and God's love living in you. The more completely, then, that we love as Jesus loves the more completely we know God. This is the way we begin to "see" God even now. The complete fullness of this knowledge comes only in God's Kingdom but even now we begin to know. Know by loving and know that loving is knowledge of God.

MARY AND THE HEALING OF OUR FEAR

A reflection from Journeying with the Lord by Carlo Cardinal Martini

The Book of Genesis invites us to face or fear and anxiety. This fear came from Adam & Eve's having taken the direction of their life into their own hands. They were afraid of God's reaction. St. Paul says, "*before the world was made, God chose us in Christ to be holy and spotless and to live through love in his presence*" (Eph.1:4). This refers us to God's Plan of Salvation through a covenant made with our race and realized in our time through the Church. When we think of the Church we think of Mary, the paradigm of believers and the symbol of the Church. Who is holy and spotless in God's presence? Mary is. No matter how discouraged we are by ourselves and others we can rejoice because we have Mary before us.

Mary's words, "*let what you have said be done in me*". She calls herself the Lord's slave. But God turned that into a deeper and more tender relationship. When Mary's words do is reveal that she finds her identity in her relationship with God. This relationship becomes for her a mission to bring the Savior to the world. The angel how made her aware of this said, "*Don't be afraid!*" Again, we are brought face to face with our fears, but now we are told that in God we need *not* be afraid. God is not the cause of fear! The cause is our refusal of love, of God's love. But God reveals that his love for us endures no matter what we do.

Mary lives on the wave of the biblical revelation which is actualized through her. She lives in the triple awareness of her personal dedication to God, her love for her people and her responsibility towards us all. This is symbolized by her encounter with Elizabeth and embodied in the Magnificat. She declares that the Almighty has (note the past tense) done great things, has shown his power, has made the oppression of the mighty vain, has come to the help of Israel and of all the poor. Mary has begun to experience all this personally. It will be fulfilled in yet new ways in and through Jesus.

From this last perspective, Mary's canticle is a prophesy. What God has done in leading Israel though its role in Salvation History is fulfilled in Mary and in her Son and is to be continued through the Church. The canticle expresses the joy in Mary's heart as she reflects on all this. She had not yet personally experienced the fullness of God's great work but she is sure it will be accomplished, just as it has begun to be in her. This awareness is given us to revive our hopes in the power and presence of God's love in our lives, in and through the roles we play in God's Salvation History.

Remember that Mary's canticle is her gift to us. It is phrased in the first person. It is about "my heart" and "my joy". It begins individually but leads inevitably to the community of all called by God. God first came to the help of Israel and now is coming to help all humankind. We are a part of that community and of the joy and love that is God's gift to each of its members, and to itself as a single living whole. Our lives are each a prophesy of what God is doing for all our race and God is doing it in us through the Spirit.