

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

THEME: **RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Pentecost marks the end of the Easter season. Today we remember how the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and the Virgin Mary in the form of fiery tongues, an event that took place fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost is also the official inauguration of the Christian Church by the apostolic preaching of St. Peter which resulted in the conversion of 3000 Jews to the Christian faith.

Today's Scripture readings remind us that Pentecost is an event of both the past and the present. The main message of today's readings is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is something to be shared with others. In other words, the readings remind us that the gift of the Holy Spirit moves its recipients to action and inspires them to share this gift with others.

Jesus in our Gospel reading gave his apostles a foretaste of Pentecost on the evening of Easter Sunday by appearing to them and inviting them to carry on the mission given to him by his heavenly Father. He then empowered them to do so by breathing upon them and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." On the day of Pentecost, Jesus fulfilled his promise to send the Advocate to his disciples. The Holy Spirit would enable them to fulfill Jesus' commission to preach the Gospel to all nations.

Our first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, describes in detail the miraculous transformation that took place during the first Pentecost. There was first "a noise like a strong driving wind." Then there were "tongues of fire" resting on the disciples, and each of them was filled with the Holy Spirit. The first manifestation of their reception of the Holy Spirit came when the apostles began to proclaim the Good News of Jesus, and everyone there was able to understand them "in his own tongue."

St. Paul in our second reading explains how the sharing of the various spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit enriches the Church. He refers to the varieties of gifts given to the Church as coming from the same Spirit Who activates all of them in us for the common good. The gifts may take different forms like prophecy, teaching, administration, acts of charity, healing and speaking in tongues, and they may reside in different persons like apostles, prophets, teachers, healers, and so on. St. Paul insists that these spiritual gifts are to be used in the present time for the benefit of others, for the common good and for the building up of the body of Christ.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, like the Apostles and early disciples of Jesus we also have received the Holy Spirit at our Baptism and Confirmation, and we are expected to share our gifts with our parish Community and with people around us. On this Pentecost day let us consider our own parish Community and ask to what extent the gifts of the Holy Spirit are reflecting here.

Is our parish alive? Are we devoting our time, our gifts and our energies to the building up of our parish community? Are we open to new ways of doing things? Have we discovered our gifts and are we ready to use them in building up our parish?

As we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit today let us ask him to fall afresh on us and rekindle in us the fire of his love and the zeal to witness for Jesus.