

## Pentecost Sunday – Mass During The Day - Cycle A

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I would like to offer some thoughts about today the day Jesus established the Church. Today we hear about living life in spite of the fear that enters the human heart. Today is the day we as believers receive the Holy Spirit. Today is Pentecost.

After one turns about twenty five or so, it seems we start on a new journey of life that includes Wisdom. It surprises us sometimes that we begin to make decisions that are rather mature. Those that don't get it, they make reality TV shows about and usually start with the line, "hey, look what I can do or won't it be cool if..."! But for those who do get it, one may also see more risk in life and that in turn may produce more anxiety and fear. It seems our lives are forever changed when we taste fear as if that Pandora's box of fear is opened and we can do nothing. That human instinct to face all situations with "fight or flight" reaction does not on the surface seem to offer any alternatives. But today, we hear how we can face unknown situations and challenges without the customary fear.

When I was very much younger one bright summer afternoon, my mom put me in charge of my three siblings and went off shopping. My younger brother started doing stunts on the next door neighbor's swing set and fell and put a rather serious gash in his head. I can still remember being aghast and fearful he would die from all the blood that was all over his face and head. Long before the day of cell phones and since I was supposedly in-charge, I needed to bandage the wound and put ice on it only because around my house that is what you did. Then I needed to wait until my mom came home which thankfully was only a short while later. Yes he needed stitches and to this day I kid him that he lost more than blood! But all joking aside, I was not prepared for this most unexpected event and I was very fearful, but also relieved when my mom arrived and with her wisdom and calm took over the crisis.

In seeming contrast, today is the completion of Jesus' promises. Today we see the coming of the Advocate. The first reading from Acts is the physical details of what happened. Almost like a news clip. There were these Jewish men who were hiding in fear and all of a sudden it is time. I love the way it is put – "when the time for Pentecost was fulfilled" – we see God does have a plan for us. There is a plan to combat chaos. Now the Advocate, the Paraclete, the Spirit comes and fills up the consciousness, the very souls of these fearful men. It may seem to be a private affair, but in reality, it needs to go public. It needs to be recognized and even validated by those around these Apostles. The change in each who received the Spirit is very pronounced and they are very much given the power to witness. The simple acceptance of the Spirit allows the spirit to speak. The Spirit overcomes the not so trivial problems of language and fear so it can make itself known to all. This is in contrast to those who have their own agenda – even usurping the Gospel and twisting it into a power for personal aggrandizement. Even in today's world. All we can do is to be honest and accept the Spirit's invitation to dwell within us. The Spirit will do the rest no matter how unexpected, after all there is a plan – God's plan.

The other readings, Psalm 104, the Letter to the Corinthians, and the Sequence all tell of the power of the Spirit. Not undisciplined Power, but just the opposite – disciplined, focused on acknowledging the glory of God, invited, bearing gifts of healing for our shortcomings and damaged and false lives we seem stuck in. The Spirit comes to tell of the Father in the spiritual realm, just like Jesus did in the physical realm. It gives all initiated Christians the power to say "yes" to the life the Father has given us. It gives us the power to take even the most fearful events and make them glorify the Lord even if it is just to say yes and then allow the Spirit to accomplish great things in and through us. That word "cooperation" seems to fit here. Accepting what comes our way and working to make it a gift back to the Father seems to fit here as well.

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The Gospel of John tells of the same story as the Acts of the Apostles read earlier. But John wants to not be just a historian or news reporter, but rather to make connections. He takes the promise of Jesus for the Spirit and shows how it is the foundation of the mission of the Church. Whenever someone is asked to commit to do something in the Scriptures inevitably it is accompanied by the necessary assistance to make it happen. Here too we get a mission for “Church” and the Power of the Spirit to make it happen. This very simple idea is repeated over and over again. We are never left to our own devices to do the will of the Father. We are always given the required assistance. This should sink into our very beings and be the basis of our rejection of fear. For if we are given the power to make our “yes” a reality, then we need to ask ourselves, “what do we fear?” It might be easy to say “all well and good”, but that was two thousand years ago. But we would be wrong. It happens every Easter Vigil where the new Catechumens and Candidates receive or complete their Sacraments of Initiation. It happens the beginning of every year when we have Confirmation of the youth and separately adults. Where they are confirmed or sealed with the Holy Spirit as Christian believers. Sealed and reconfirmed in their identity as children of the Father. They are given the power of the Spirit with their “yes”. We too who have been fully initiated were given the Power to say “yes” to the challenges of the life the Father has given us. So we too should ask ourselves, “What are we afraid of?”

This day of remembrance of Pentecost gives us once again a chance to pause and see our lives in the perspective that we do not walk alone - even in the vagaries of life. We as adopted daughters and sons of the Father are given the Spirit to strengthen us and Jesus to be our mediator with the Father. We should be shouting our joy from the roof tops! Yes let us shout, “Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth”. Yes, renew us Lord, every day!