

Pentecost Sunday B

For the “ancient Church,” Pentecost was a beginning - a beginning of the Church born in the Spirit of God. It was a beginning of zeal, fortitude, and tremendous trust in the Spirit of God in ministry. For many today, including some clergy, in the “modern church,” Pentecost has been reduced to an end - the end of the Easter season or some simplified watered-down happy “birthday” of the Church. For many, Pentecost, and the Sacrament of Confirmation remain as much a mystery as the Holy Spirit Himself. Pentecost and Holy Confirmation remain a much untapped source of tremendous life-giving grace for us individually, the Church and society as a whole. When we, as individuals, are emblazoned with the fire of the Holy Spirit, we bring that fire into the Church and into society as a whole.

The Holy Spirit must never be reduced to a “force,” He is a person, a Divine Person, who loves us and wants a relationship with us. He is neither fire, wind, nor a bird, He is the 3rd PERSON of the Most Blessed Trinity who we can and must talk to, share with, listen to, and learn from. EVERY baptized and confirmed Catholic has received from the Holy Spirit “charisms” or gifts to bring into the Church and society as a whole.

Every Catholic is called to holiness and all have gifts of the Holy Spirit for His use and for the building up of the Church—the Kingdom of God, not for building up of the kingdom of our egos or false identities. St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians reminds us of this. The gift of the Holy Spirit and His charisms are given for the whole Body, the Church, not to be compared to each other or to cause separation or division.

In St. John Paul II’s ***Theology of the Body***, the saint reminds us of whom we truly are and that the effect of original sin has distorted our desires and they need to be constantly purified and cleansed. Original sin and our own sin wounds us and sometimes we live in that sin and get distorted images of ourselves, which need to be healed. Shame will also come into play due to the bad, undiscerned choices we make in our life and this causes us to fear.

St. John in his Holy Gospel points this out in chapter 20. He states: **“when the doors were locked...for fear of the Jews.”** The use of the word “fear” here has nothing to do with the cardinal virtue of prudence. This fear was not from the Holy Spirit, but was born from their lack of the Spirit and human insecurities. But, what happened next? **“Jesus came in and stood in their midst and said ‘Peace be with you.’”** Quite often today we stay locked in our own fearful hearts, insecurities and shame due to unconfessed sins and unhealed wounds.

Fear needs to be conquered by faith in a Divine Person who is in love with you: the Holy Spirit, the Advocate. He will always help us pray and take us to Christ and the Father, but He cannot do this unless we allow Him “in” to our hearts and this takes trust! Yes, people have hurt us in our lives but God NEVER will. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and is sent by Jesus, our Savior, and He will guide us to the Truth.

Jesus desperately wants to give us His Peace, but for Him to do that, we must allow Him to breathe His Spirit on us, we must not be afraid as St. John Paul II said so many times. We all truly need to be healed and this cannot happen without forgiving those who have hurt us and asking forgiveness from God for our sins.

He breathes on us and we receive the Holy Spirit, not just at Baptism and Holy Confirmation, when we receive the oil of Sacred Chrism, which is breathed upon and consecrated by the bishop, but also when we go to confession. The Holy Sacrament of Confession, which was instituted by Christ in the Upper Room, and handed on to the Apostles, is proclaimed in today's Holy Gospel. Jesus "breathes" on the Apostles and says: "receive the Holy Spirit..." When the priest raises his anointed right hand and prays the formula of absolution, you receive the Holy Spirit through the priest, who is interceding for you. The Holy Spirit is mentioned twice in the formula, which states: "sent the **Holy Spirit amongst us for the forgiveness of sins...**" The Holy Spirit confects the Holy Eucharist through the priest, your sins are forgiven through the Holy Spirit and we can't grow, be healed, be loved or love without the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit isn't just for self-identified "charismatic" people, but for ALL OF US! We all have gifts and charisms given to us, start dusting them off, get to confession, allow Him "in" and be healed. Share your gifts and charisms with others for the building up of the Kingdom of God. Don't know how too? Simple—just ask The Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth. Keep in mind and pray daily for the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit:

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: **Wisdom** (the gift that helps us to order our relationship to the created world properly; **Understanding** (the gift that helps us to grasp the very essence of the truths of the Catholic Faith and to gain a certitude about our beliefs that moves beyond faith); **Counsel** (the gift that enables us to judge how best to act almost by intuition); **Fortitude** (going beyond courage, this is the gift found in martyrs that allows them to suffer death rather than to renounce the Faith; **Knowledge** (through this gift we can determine God's purpose for our lives; **Piety** (the gift that takes our willingness to worship and serve God beyond a sense of duty, so that we desire to worship and serve Him out of love); and **Fear of the Lord** (perhaps the most misunderstood gift, this gift gives us the desire not to offend God, as well as the certainty that God will supply us the grace needed to keep from offending Him.

The twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit are charity (or love), joy, peace, patience, benignity (or kindness), goodness, longanimity (the disposition to bear injuries patiently: forbearance), mildness, faith, modesty, self-restraint, and chastity.

- Fr. David M. Chiantella