

Feast of the Pentecost, Year C. Acts 2:1-11; Rom 8:8-17; Jn 14:15-16. 23-26

We want to cling to someone we love and depend on. We can't bear to see the person go or leave us. When Jesus told the apostles he was leaving them, they were all plunged into gloom. But he said to them, it is for your own good that I go, because unless I go, the spirit will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. Today, we commemorate the fulfilment of that great promise that Jesus made to his disciples. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is not merely a historical event; it is a real and recurrent event in the life of the Church. Today is the final, the end and climactic day of the season we call Easter. Pentecost was one of the greatest feasts of the Jewish calendar. Originally, an agricultural feast celebrated yearly, it later became the celebration of the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. At this feast, just as in the Passover, many Jews from the countries around the Mediterranean came on pilgrimage. It is on this day that God made a covenant with his chosen people that God now gives his Holy Spirit to the new Israel, the Church. Today, the baptism of fire announced by John in Luke 3:16, takes place. God sends the Spirit of his son and the Church is born. This great day, was strictly speaking the birth of the Church, until this day, it had remained a sect in Judaism. The Spirit gave the Church the utterance, boldness, vigor, the enlightenment and all it takes to realize her mandate and true essence in the world. The Church typifies the kingdom already realized and yet to come. It was on this day that the church which existed just as sect in Judaism began to separate herself from the unbelieving Jews. In 1 Cor 16:8, St. Paul speaks the observance of this feast among the Jews in diaspora [Pentecost at Ephesus].

The rushing wind is a sign because the Spirit means both breadth and wind in the Hebrew culture. This baptism of fire which the apostles received has been received by many of us at baptism and confirmation. Precisely at confirmation, we received the gift of the prophetic voice of witness. It makes us authentic and grown Christians, firm and immovable and soldiers of Christ. The miracle of Pentecost is not in the fact that the apostles, all of Palestinian origin spoke in tongues or foreign languages, but essentially that people, those present heard them in their own languages. People heard the proclamation of God's wonderful deeds in their own individual languages and mother tongues. This is precisely the miracle of Pentecost. I want us to note this because even in St. Paul's time as it is common today, Christians were argued, quarreled and misunderstood the whole thing. Paul insists that no one should speak in tongues if there is nobody to understand or interpret what is said [cf. 1 Cor 14:26-34]. Speaking in tongues is not necessary for salvation or becoming a Christian, but love is [1 Cor 14]. St. Paul requests that people should be quiet in the Christian

assembly and speak only to God. On the Pentecost day, the apostles spoke a new language. What was this new language? It was the language of peace rather than war; the language of co-operation rather than of competition; the language of forgiveness rather than vengeance; the language of hope rather than despair; the language of tolerance rather than bigotry; the language of friendship rather than hostility; the language of unity rather than division; the language of love rather than hate. Another message of Christianity is that the church is inclusive. Those who become Christians are not to renounce their languages or mother tongues as the Jewish proselytes of old. God wishes to be praised and worship by people of all languages and cultures. Through the gift of the spirit, people of different languages learned to profess one faith, to the praise and glory of God. That is the miracle of Pentecost. That is the miracle to which we are called. May we embrace this miracle thankfully, giving it all the attention and response it so deserves at all times, amen.

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