

Pentecost 2018

The Miracle of Pentecost

St. Andrew's Church – Jacksonville, Or

By Fr. Bill Baker

John 14:15-31

Magicians have captured the imaginations of millions with their spectacular shows of deception. From sawing beautiful women in half to making people disappear, I can't help but think that magic is mankind's way of trying to emulate the miraculous. In Exodus chapter seven we see how magic has always been a gimmick of mankind to illustrate power over the constraints of time and space. In the event I am talking about Moses approaches Pharaoh and lays his rod before him and it turns into a snake. Pharaoh, mocking Moses, brings in his magicians who also have sticks that turn into snakes. Using a well known trick that people have been entertained by and know quite well, God does something unexpected and steps outside worldly confines to show that His power is no magicians trick...the eternal staff of God swallows the worldly snakes of the sorcerers consuming them all leaving no remnant behind. God's power is not a trick...it is real.

In the miraculous evidences of God we find that God acts outside of time and space while using things encapsulated by time and space so that we may be able to grasp the significance of the actions he takes on our behalves. These evidences of God all take place within the binding essence of the Trinity where the Father, being the source of power, enters mankind in the miraculous incarnation of the Son...the Word made flesh, instilling the truth and love of the Father on all mankind through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the Incarnation the Word is made flesh in Jesus Christ...a singular action in Jesus only...you and I are not incarnate. The Resurrection and the Ascension are also singular events no man could attain until our Risen Lord took his place at the Father's right hand proclaiming victory in our redemption. The miracles of the Incarnation, the Resurrection and the Ascension are all miracles we standby and watch with limited understanding...finite minds cannot, even today, fully grasp the depth of

what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. But! The actions of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost instilled mankind with a miraculous nature of God Himself...we have become eternal beings. Those who profess Jesus Christ as Saviour have entered the body of believers...the body of Christ! We don't need magic tricks or gimmicks to attract people, but the very Gospel itself expressed in truth and love by faith! By the Holy Spirit the church can now speak and act according to the Fathers will in a way that was not possible before. God does not speak only to Moses, Abraham or the prophets but now through the universal church of all believers. THIS IS THE MIRACLE OF PENTECOST!

At Holy Communion more than a blessings is secured during the Consecration of the elements of bread and wine. There is an invoking of the Holy Spirit, a full outpouring of God's grace and mercy...a feeding on the Real Presence of Christ to our strength and salvation. The giving and receiving of the Holy Spirit denies the black dog of sin, feeding only the white dog of the spirit, beating down Satan under our feet, and allowing us to walk in true repentance. At Pentecost we received a final gift...a promise of eternal love...and undeserved eternal life...

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" Jesus said, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." Here we see the full commitment of the Holy Trinity; the Father sending, the Son speaking and the Holy Spirit acting within the hearts and souls of mankind as the completer of the work of the Father and the Son.

And who is this Spirit we speak of? Jesus continues, *"Even the spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."* I see this as a charge, a responsibility on the part of those who, through faith, have received the Holy Ghost. There are those in the world who continue to look downward, focused on worldly efforts, lost in the mainstream of social media and cultural adaptations. If they are not shown the heavens above who is to blame for their denial? The world is an impediment to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and it is the Church founded on the blood of Christ that is empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk amongst the mire that we may turn hearts and eyes upward...THIS IS THE MIRACLE OF PENTECOST!

And again we hear Jesus speak, *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”* This is the ultimate sign off...Christ must ascend if we are to receive the Holy Spirit.

St. Augustine reminds us that this is *“not because of any inequality between the Word of God and the Holy Spirit but because the presence of the Son of man among (us) would impeded the coming of the Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit did not humble himself, as the Son did, by taking on him the form of a servant. It was necessary therefore that the form of the servant should be removed from their eyes. For as long as they looked on that form, they thought that Christ was no more than what they saw him to be.”*

We cannot possibly expect to enter eternal life and be gathered within our Father's arms unless the God-Man Jesus Christ first enters the kingdom himself. In perfect righteousness Christ has prepared the way so that mankind may transition into the heavenly realm complete in righteousness. In Christ's absence the Holy Ghost will carry on the work of the Father and the Son until the Will of God is complete. Christ must ascend if we are to have a deeper relationship with the Father. Christ must ascend if we are to have a deeper understanding of Christ himself. Christ must ascend if we are to carry out God's purpose on Earth!...It is the Ascension of Jesus Christ that opens the path for the Holy Spirit to enter the hearts of the human race. THIS IS THE MIRACLE OF PENTECOST!

A little over two years ago, while meditating on the miracles we see in the Bible, I contacted Fr. Dan Squires wondering if he had any experience with the miraculous in our modern age. He was happy to reply with some antidotes that could also be interpreted as belief, coincidence, luck or just plain fear of the unknown. But it is what he said at the end of his email that put everything into perspective,

“I have the great privilege as a priest to witness something no less miraculous every time I celebrate Holy Communion. The great mystery of

our redemption is made present and I have the awesome duty of bringing the Sacrament to those waiting to be nourished at the rail."

We live in a world where most people would rather go see a magic show than experience the miraculous reality of the Eucharist. The miracle of the Incarnation, the Resurrection and the Ascension are not the tricks of a magician, but the realities of a Heavenly Father whose love transcends the world. Come to the Table today focused on God Almighty present with us in the bread and wine of time and space that you may experience the eternal fullness of God within you. THIS IS THE MIRACLE OF PENTECOST!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.