

## 6.5.2022 The Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11)

The passage we read from the book of Acts this morning paints a vivid picture of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the Church on the day of Pentecost. The Epistle describes “*a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind*” filling the house where the disciples were sitting, “*cloven tongues like as of fire*” resting on each of them. We read that “*they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*” (Acts 2:2-4), and the Church Father, St. John Chrysostom, reminds us that it wasn’t just the twelve that were filled with the Holy Ghost, but the hundred and twenty that were gathered together (Homily 4 – Acts).

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was not poured out on a select few, but upon every member of the Church. The Spirit moved into the hearts, souls, and minds of every early Christian empowering them for the purpose Jesus had assigned to them: to be His witnesses. He had said, “*... ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:8b). Our epistle describes a scene where every believer is so empowered by the Holy Spirit that they immediately begin to be His witnesses by speaking in various languages about the wonderful works of God accomplished through our Lord and Savior. This passage is a stunning example of Christians fulfilling God’s purpose by His power.

Our calling is to fulfill God’s purpose by His power, and in order to gain a more complete understanding of His purpose and the power of His Holy Spirit, let’s step back to the beginning. It was Fr. Georges Lemaître, a Belgian cosmologist and Catholic priest, who proposed the theory that the observable universe began with the explosion of a single particle at a definite point in time. Nearly all astronomers today accept Fr. Lemaître’s big bang theory, and his thoughts line up well with what we read in the biblical account of creation.

In the book of Genesis the uncreated world is depicted as a dark and chaotic place. We read, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the*

*deep*” (Genesis 1:1-2a). Earth, when God first called it into existence, is described as being “*without form and void,*” and the same Hebrew words that are used to describe earth at that moment are used later by the prophet Isaiah (34:11) to communicate confusion and emptiness.

At the dawn of time, in the moment that God brought the physical world into existence, Genesis speaks of darkness, chaos, and confusion. Perhaps exactly what you’d expect after the big bang, but as the passage continues we read that above the chaos “*the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters*” (Genesis 1:2b). So, in the beginning, we not only recognize God’s omnipotent power as He creates all things from nothing, we also see His personal presence and His purpose as the Spirit of God hovers over the darkness, the chaos, and the confusion, to the end that He may bring about life and order and beauty.

The creation account in Genesis reveals the work of the Holy Spirit in the physical world, and as we continue to turn the pages of Scripture we see the Holy Spirit working in humanity in the same way. Almighty God - Father, Son, and Spirit, created all things, both visible and invisible, and creation was either good, or in our case, *very good* (Genesis 1:31), but here’s the problem: We rebelled. We gave into temptation, and in doing so, we unleashed a new kind of darkness, chaos, and confusion.

Our condition after the Fall of mankind can be likened to earth in the beginning: *without form and void*. The failure of our first parents in the Garden of Eden left us, their offspring, empty of anything good, but thanks be to God, because as it was in the beginning when the Spirit of God hovered over the darkness, it is now, and shall ever be. The Holy Spirit has come to us to complete the same work He accomplished at the creation of the world. He has come to restore life and order and beauty. He has come to transform the human heart. He has come to give us the grace and strength we need to truly love God and our neighbor. In the words of St. Paul, the Spirit has come to make us a “*new creation*” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This is the miracle of Pentecost, and let’s take a moment to consider the way God worked in history to accomplish this miracle. God sent His Son, and at the beginning of His ministry on this earth, our Lord was baptized in the

Jordan river. At that moment, “*the heavens opened,*” the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, “*And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Mark 1:10-11). At the beginning of our Lord’s ministry we see a manifestation of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The One, True God who, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth, is present at the baptism of our Lord to mark the beginning of a new creation, and it is the Spirit of God descending upon our Lord that empowers Him to confront the darkness, the chaos, and the confusion, to the end that He may once again bring about life and order and beauty.

When Jesus made the blind see, the lame walk, and the deaf hear, when He healed the sick or forgave people for their sins, He was, through the Spirit and like the Spirit, hovering over the darkness. The Son of God, through the Spirit of God, was reversing the Fall of mankind. He was creating life where there once was death. He was making “*all things new*” (Revelation 21:5).

God sent His Son, and in Hebrews we read that it was “*through the eternal Spirit*” that our Savior “*offered Himself*” to God on the Cross at Calvary (Hebrews 9:14). Our Lord offered His life through the Spirit, on Easter Day it was the Spirit “*who raised Jesus from the dead*” (Romans 8:11), and on Ascension Day by the power of the Spirit our Lord “*was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight*” (Acts 1:9).

The Father sent the Son, and the Son through the Spirit accomplished the work of our redemption (John 19:30). He hovered over the darkness, “*offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins,*” and “*sat down at the right hand of God*” (Hebrews 10:12). “*God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name*” (Philippians 2:9), and it is from this place of glory, majesty, dominion, and power that our Lord fulfilled His promise to send the Holy Spirit, to be poured out upon the Church, to come and enter into the heart and soul and mind of every Christian.

By fulfilling His promise and making the body of every Christian “*a temple of the Holy Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 6:19), our Savior Christ has commissioned us, and empowered us, to continue His new work of creation. The Spirit lives in us to the end that we may, like Him, hover over the darkness of this world,

and through Him transform chaos and emptiness into the fruit of the Spirit: *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”* (Galatians 5:22-23).

On this Feast of Pentecost we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we remember that the Spirit of God, through us, still hovers over the waters of darkness. Confusion and emptiness are part of our lives here on this earth, but the fulfilled promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of God Himself, is evidence that we are instruments in His new creation. With the Spirit of God living in us, we are *“the salt of the earth,”* we are *“the light of the world”* (Matthew 5:13, 14), we are the hands and feet of Jesus, and this Truth that stretches into eternity changes the way we live right now. By the grace of God may we begin each day by submitting to the direction and the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), striving to work with Him (1 Corinthians 3:9) as He transforms darkness, chaos, and confusion into life and order and beauty.