

Whitsunday

First Lesson (Epistle)

**Acts 2: 1-11**

<sup>1</sup>And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

<sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

<sup>3</sup>And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

<sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

<sup>5</sup>And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

<sup>6</sup>Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

<sup>7</sup>And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

<sup>8</sup>And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

<sup>9</sup>Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

<sup>10</sup>Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

<sup>11</sup>Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

Second Lesson (Gospel)

John 14:15-31

<sup>15</sup>If ye love me, keep my commandments.

<sup>16</sup>And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;

<sup>17</sup>Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

<sup>18</sup>I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

<sup>19</sup>Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

<sup>20</sup> At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

<sup>21</sup> He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

<sup>22</sup> Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

<sup>24</sup> He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

<sup>25</sup> These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

<sup>26</sup> But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

<sup>28</sup> Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

<sup>29</sup> And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

<sup>30</sup> Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

<sup>31</sup> But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

## Introduction

Several weeks ago, I watched the movie *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, about the life of Fred Rogers, or Mr. Rogers as I called him. It was a biography, but the story was told from the perspective of a reporter for Esquire magazine. What had started out as a bit piece turned into a full article after the reporter got to know Mr. Rogers.

When I was a child, I watched this program with anticipation and appreciation. He taught, by example, how we should love and treat other people. I liked the world of make believe and the puppets and storytelling were wonderful. As I grew older, and worked in law enforcement, the presence and attitude of Mr. Rogers toward everyone else was even more remarkable. I learned he was a Presbyterian minister and genuinely believed that we were to love one another as Christ had commanded us to do. One thing he stressed was that love grows the more we give it. He said, "Love seems to be something that keeps filling up within us. The more we give away, the more we have to give." His ministry, and especially his involvement with children, was to show that we must love each other, and we must love ourselves. Rogers would tell us, each week, why love is important and how it can be hard sometimes. One of my favorite quotes of his states, "Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like 'struggle. The toughest thing is to love somebody who has done something mean to you. Especially when that somebody has been yourself."

Fred Rogers died in 2003 of stomach cancer, putting off treatment so he could honor obligations to children's charities and organizations. He continues a legacy that shows how loving your neighbor, and a sincere belief that all people matter, can have influence in the world. Isn't this what Jesus was teaching us and what he refers to in tandem with the greatest commandment of them all? Jesus tells us, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). We all know this can be hard to do sometimes. Human beings can be hard to love and living our life the way Christ wants us to live is impossible on our own. As we celebrate Whitsunday, or the coming of the Holy Spirit, we are reminded in our gospel message today that we have:

**"the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).**

## Body

**(John 14: 15-20 Jesus tell His disciples to obey His commandments and that when he departs, he shall send the Holy Spirit to guide them.)**

Earlier in the Gospel of John, Jesus, our Lord and our God, demonstrated His love for his disciples by humbly kneeling down to wash their feet. At this point he tells them that **"if you love me, you will obey my commandments."** It is important to keep the commandments of God, and this requires personal discipline and focus.

It is a part of our obedience to His commandments that we show our love for Him. Disobedience is not only a failure of performance or a failure of strength, but in some sense, it is also a failure of love. To love is to submit and let go. Those who love God obey Him most joyfully and naturally. To say, “I really love Jesus. I just do not want Him to tell me how to live my life” is a terrible misunderstanding of both Jesus and what loving Him is all about. Jesus also spoke to the proper source of our obedience. It is not fear, pride, or desire to earn His blessing or favor, instead, obedience comes from our love for Christ. Noted theologian, Charles Spurgeon put it this way. “Obedience must have love for its mother, nurse, and food. The essence of obedience lies in the hearty love which prompts the deed rather than in the deed itself.”

Jesus knows how difficult it is for our fallen nature to obey and keep His commandments. The disciples feared, “Jesus is abandoning us. When He leaves, we will not know what to do.”

Jesus reassures them by saying, “*I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you.*” In other words, they would not have less help; they would have more help because the Father would send another Helper. Jesus understood that His disciples (both those with Him on that evening and those across the centuries) would need God’s grace, presence and power to keep His commandments. God the Son promised to pray to God the Father and ask for the giving of God the Holy Spirit to the believer to accomplish this. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would fulfill just that role for us, being sent to empower and help the believer.

Jesus states, “***But you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you***”

Jesus spoke of three aspects of a disciple’s relationship to the Holy Spirit.

In contrast to the world, the disciple of Jesus *should know* the Holy Spirit.

In contrast to the world, the disciple of Jesus *should* have the Holy Spirit **with** them.

In contrast to the world, the disciple of Jesus *should* have the Holy Spirit **in** them.

**(John 14: 21-35 Jesus reiterates to Judas how He will manifest Himself to the world. As He departs, he gives the gift of the Holy Spirit and His peace.)**

Jesus reassures his disciples that he would be revealed to and remain among the disciples through love, obedience, and union with the Father and the Son. These were not primarily mystical or supernatural experiences, but real life lived out in the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

***“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace, I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”***

The Spirit dwells inside every true Christian. The body of faithful Christians becomes His temple (1 Corinthians 3:16). The Holy Spirit is described as a 'Counsellor' or 'Helper.' As Paul tells the

Galatians, The 'Fruit of the Spirit', or the result of His work, is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22).

The Holy Spirit is an important figure throughout the Bible. From beginning to end, the Holy Spirit has always been active: In the beginning, creating, and at the end of the story, tending to us. He comforts us, helps us, guides us, reminds us, teaches us, comes along side us, counsels us, and intercedes and advocates for us. There is no area of life in which the believer does not need the help of the Holy Spirit.

"Without a life full of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to build the body of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

### **Action**

Jesus tells his Apostles, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He is preparing them to go out into the world and teach people what Jesus has taught them. On this Whitsunday or Pentecost, we have a new beginning as well. We can remember what Christ Jesus taught us and we can seek to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. We can strive to keep His commandments and in doing so, we can love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

It is not easy to follow the Commandments to love one another. It is simple, but it is not easy, because so often people seem to default toward finding reasons not to love. Fortunately, this is the beauty of Pentecost. Yes, there was the miraculous moment in our reading from Acts of the multitude hearing the Gospel in their own tongues, but more importantly, for the long term of the Church, this is when God's Spirit began indwelling in the lives of Christians. When love becomes hard or keeping the commandments is difficult, we can reach out to the Spirit, and we can rely on God and His guidance in our lives.

### **Conclusion**

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the guidance from God, and the furthering of the kingdom of God is hastened through doing acts of love. And as we know from the summary of the law, the commandments of God are all about love for God and love for our neighbor.

On Pentecost, as the Holy Ghost descends on the early Church, we behold the revelation of the Trinity in His fullness. God the Father created us, God the Son redeemed us, and God the Holy Spirit guides us. The Spirit is our guide, He is God's power in action, and an active force that God sends out to accomplish His will. He brings conviction to the unbeliever, unites the believer with Christ and strengthens the Body of Christ. Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Romans that

**"The Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words"** (Rom. 8:26).

As we enter the week and build up to Trinity Sunday, let us remember to let the Spirit guide us and help us to keep His commandments and to love each other as Christ taught us.

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<sup>1</sup> Pastor Luis Ángel Díaz-Pabón, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" 2024.

As Mr. Rogers reminds us, "When we love a person, we accept him or her exactly as is, the lovely with the unlovely, the strong along with the fearful, the true mixed in with the façade."

In doing so, we are reminded that God loves us despite being broken and sinful. Knowing that, perhaps we can love and accept ourselves as well.

To the only wise God, Our Savior, Be glory, majesty, dominion and power, Both Now and Forever, Amen.