

## **Day of Pentecost (May 31, 2020)**

### **Whitsunday**

Year A RCL

Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:25-35, 37; John 20:19-23

### **“Receive the Holy Spirit”**

By: The Rev. Fr. Fabian Villalobos

Today we are celebrating the Feast of Pentecost, which according to the books of Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, Pentecost was the Jewish celebration seven weeks following the Passover. Shavuot in Hebrew or Pentecost in Greek was an agricultural feast, a harvest festival, the festival of the weeks to offer and thank God for the first fruits. After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the first century people could no longer offer their first fruits inside the temple, thus the Jewish Pentecost began to include giving thanks for the Torah, the law of God.

For Christians, Pentecost is the moment when the Church, represented in the disciples, receives the Holy Spirit as we hear in today's first lesson. Fifty days have passed from Easter day; we gather today like each Sunday as a community of believers to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the living presence of God in our lives.

The presence of the Holy Spirit was manifested with the physical expressions of sound, wind, fire, and the ability to speak and understand in different languages. The disciples as followers of Jesus were filled with the strength coming from heaven, their lives changed, they passed from fearful and confused men, to bold and brave leaders capable to speak about God's deeds of power.

The presence of the Holy Spirit gives to all who receive Him, the capacities needed to enter in new life with the Risen Lord. Jesus promised to be with the disciples forever and to send to them the Holy Spirit, the advocate and paraclete to lead them into all truth. Like in the gospels of the apparitions after the resurrection of Jesus when the disciples were together, the Holy Spirit irrupts in human history and His presence transforms the disciples, making of them announcers and messengers of God's marvelous works.

The Holy Spirit makes possible for the believers today to be the new disciples. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Church is capable to be the community of love that preaches and lives the Gospel. We in our congregation of Christ Episcopal Church Dallas, have experienced the uninterrupted guidance of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost Day in 1890. Today and for the past 130-years, the fearful disciples have become the faithful announcers by God's Holy Spirit. Our Church like any congregation overcome and surpass the

obstacles and difficulties through the strength and support that comes from God.

After receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples begin to speak in languages unknown, however those who listen to the disciples understand each one in their own language. God makes the communication and communion among the multiplicity possible because the language of love surpasses all cultures and races. In front of God, all human beings are equal, and every person is heir of God's same promises.

The fact that there were multiple languages in Jerusalem at the moment of Pentecost and that the Holy Spirit allows for communication and comprehension in a multicultural setting, manifests how inclusive, accepting and diverse is the grace of God.

It is in this sense that the Feast of Pentecost reveals how much the church and society together need to appreciate and learn from the gift of the Holy Spirit. Regrettably, the sinful division among races and the pursuing of selfish goals deny and delay the development of the new humanity.

The external division of society as we have seen here in the United States in these days, specifically after the death of George Floyd, proves how the internal

and spiritual life of the members of the society are more and more disconnected from the Spirit of Truth.

For this reason, the Feast of Pentecost is always a new beginning. Today more than ever, all humankind needs to be renewed and restored in the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew how devastated and broken the disciples were when He appears among them. The locked doors of the house where the disciples were isolated were intended to keep the Jewish authorities outside, but this did not stop the Author of Life from entering in with His peace. This scene confirms that God has the authority over time and space, and that His Church will prevail over all obstacles.

As the new disciples of today's world, it is our responsibility to proclaim and show God's deeds of power. The Holy Spirit will continue supporting and encouraging our human efforts transforming them into the society God is making anew.

It is important to mention that the assistance of the Holy Spirit does not repeal the unbelievers and sceptics. Some sneered at the disciples thinking they were drunk. Those who make a mockery of unfortunate life situations are sadly part of our society too, and sometimes their voices seem stronger and louder even

though they do not have any power over God. We must always remember that God is in control.

The community today is transformed with the powerful presence of God's Holy Spirit that continues journeying in human history making it possible to speak and understand the language of love. As we celebrate Pentecost, we can experience the same peace the disciples received. We, and all who believe, are sent like messengers of God the Father as agents of reconciliation and forgiveness for a new humanity even in a broken society. Amen.