

Pentecost Sunday (C)
(Acts 2:1-11 / John 20:19-23)
08.06.2025

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today we are grateful to God the Father and to his Son Jesus for the gift of the Holy Spirit who is the communion of love which unites them.

The Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

The same Holy Spirit was given to each one of us on the day of our baptism. On that occasion we became temples of God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit made his home within us.

Who is the Holy Spirit? How does He relate to us? How do we relate to Him?

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. Let us not be ashamed to recognize that we don't know how to pray. We are not the only ones! Even Jesus' disciples used to ask Him: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11,1). Prayer is given to us by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not cease to pray within our hearts saying: 'Abba', an Aramaic word which means 'Father', or 'Dad'. The same Holy Spirit invites us to make his prayer within us our own, to murmur slowly 'Abba', following the rhythm of our own breath – our breathing-in and our breathing-out. From the instant we were born until the day we shall breathe our last breath, prayer flows within us. It is up to us to make the Spirit's prayer within us our own. In so doing, we confess God's fatherhood and our own identity as children of God.

The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit who presides over our Lectio Divina, our prayerful reading of the Scriptures, so that the words we read in the Bible may really be the words of the living God addressed to us today and not only an historical text or poetical writings, or works of human wisdom. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, the words we read in Lectio Divina do not only increase our knowledge about God, but are an opportunity for us to know the Lord our God, to enter into a personal and loving relationship with the living God who has something to say to us as persons and as a community today.

It is interesting to notice that "when Pentecost Day came around, the apostles had all met in one room". This is not a banal, meaningless piece of information. On the contrary, it underlines an important dimension of our life of faith: the Holy Spirit is not a gift of God given to each one of us personally, full stop. The Spirit of the Lord is a gift given by God to the community, to God's people, to the Church, and consequently to each one of its members, to each one of us. We are invited to gather together as one so that we may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit all together, as members of one Body, the Church,.

The spiritual life, life in the Spirit is not just about God and each one of us, but about God and his people of which we are part, a body of which each one of us is a member. This principle has practical consequences. Let us take the example of our prayer life. Sometimes personal prayer becomes difficult for us. The temptation is to look for mystical remedies, new books on prayer, new methods of prayer, when in fact the reason for our dryness in prayer may well be due to the

fact that our relationships with those with whom we live is defective. Our prayer will flow more easily again once our broken relationships are repaired.

The narrative of the event of Pentecost tells us that the apostles heard what sounded like **a powerful wind**. Imagine your window open with a strong wind blowing outside. Suddenly, unexpectedly, all the sheets of paper which were on your table take flight and are scattered. As a consequence, your planned programmes become all mixed up... So it is with the Holy Spirit who invites us to change **our** plans for the benefit of **God's** plan, often in an unexpected way but always to teach us how to love more.

The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles under the form of tongues of fire! Fire is a regular feature in biblical theophanies, a regular feature of God's manifestations in the Bible. We have in mind the theophany at the burning bush in chapter three of the book of Exodus: "The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame blazing from the middle of a bush". Fire evokes the presence of God. Fire lightens the night, fire illumines our darkness. Fire warms us up when we are cold, when we feel depressed, desolate, lonely. Fire burns dead branches. Fire evokes the purifying and saving presence of God through the mediation of the Holy Spirit.

"Then, **the disciples began to speak foreign languages** as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech". To understand the powerful meaning of these words, it is worthwhile to remember that the Holy Spirit was given to the apostles on Pentecost day, that is to say the fiftieth day after the Resurrection of the Lord which coincided with one of the three great pilgrimage feasts of Ancient Israel, "the feast of Weeks" also called "feast of the Harvest", which fell fifty days after the "spring feast of Passover or Unleavened Bread", and which was later on followed by "the feast of Tabernacles". "The feast of Weeks" also commemorated the giving of the Law by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. It is for this reason that there were so many Jews from different nations all speaking different languages in Jerusalem on Pentecost Day. All the Jews who were able to do so used to go up to Jerusalem in pilgrimage for these major feasts. In this context, "the disciples began to speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech".

The Holy Spirit gives us the gift of speech and helps us to converse with others, understanding them and being understood by them, The Spirit, who is communion between the Father and the Son, becomes a source of communion between us. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, each one of us is no longer isolated in his or her own little world, rather we enter into relationships with others.

In the gospel passage heard this morning we were told that: "The Father will give you another **paraclete** or advocate to be with you for ever". Paraclete is another name for the Holy Spirit. A paraclete is a helper, a protector, a support in all the difficulties of our lives. To use a modern word, a paraclete is a kind of solicitor who acts as our advocate to defend and guide us in all our trials. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us and advises us. We are not alone in life. The Holy Spirit is always with us, even within us, to show us the way forward, the way of life.

Let us be attentive to the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. The Spirit comes on behalf of our heavenly Father and his Son to give us life, life to the full.

