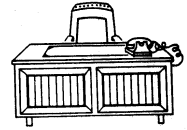


Pentecost Sunday

May 23, 2021



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Last year's Pentecost Sunday marked the official return to the celebration of the Eucharist since the shutdown orchestrated by the pandemic began. This Pentecost Sunday, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and given the new CDC guidelines regarding social distancing and the wearing of face coverings, Archbishop Listecki feels comfortable that we can continue loosening the restrictions of this past year. Therefore, with trust in the Holy Spirit, beginning with Masses for Pentecost Sunday, he is eliminating the restrictions for attendance, face coverings and social distancing, with the following considerations.

First, City of Milwaukee parishes as well as other parishes in the Archdiocese may remain subject to orders in place through local ordinances or local health departments that require masks, and those requirements should continue to be followed.

Second, we must remember that after 14 months, some people will not be comfortable in a public setting without face coverings or social distancing. We must continue to treat everyone with dignity and respect.

Third, as pastoral leaders, parishes may want to make accommodations for parishioners, including offering a section of seating where social distancing remains in place; offering a "face covering required" Mass at one of its designated Mass times; or separate Communion lines for those wearing face coverings. We must pastorally meet our people where they are at.

Fourth, although we may not need as intense a set of cleaning protocols, sanitizing worship spaces should continue as means to continue our commitment to health safety. One thing we've learned this past year is that cleaning and sanitizing is not a bad thing.

Fifth, as pastors, administrators and parish directors, you know the needs of your people the best. The guidelines you continue to set are at your discretion, including maintaining social distancing and face covering requirements. I would strongly recommend that you make decisions in consultation with your trustees, pastoral council/council chair and staff.

On the basis of the Archbishop's recommendations, we will start loosening some the pandemic restrictions going forward. I understand that the City of Milwaukee will be lifting most of the Covid restrictions from June 1st. For our community, this will not be like flipping a switch to turn things back to normal. Rather, it will be a measured approach since our comfort levels vary. This will require understanding and cooperation from all parishioners since individual responses and comfort levels differ.

Pentecost is recognized and celebrated as the birthday of the Church. It was remarkable that the Holy Spirit transformed a bunch of petrified disciples into courageous and determined evangelists, ready to die for their faith. The sending of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of Jesus' promise not to abandon his disciples. The Holy Spirit has sustained the Church's mission through the centuries, enabling her to navigate treacherous waters of uncertainty.

The Hebrew word for "spirit" is "*ruah*," which can also mean wind, breath or life force. People with asthma understand the importance of breath, something we often take for granted. A simple experiment like holding our breath helps us appreciate the need for air. In the second creation account, God's breath gave life to the first human he created.

The celebration of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection, goes back to the early fourth century. There was connection between the celebration of Pentecost and the celebration of the Jewish festival of "First Fruits," also known as the "Feast of Weeks," fifty days after the Passover. The separate celebration of Pentecost took place about the same time Ascension became a separate liturgical celebration forty days after the resurrection. This was in accordance with biblical presentations in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1-2).

Speaking in tongues was one clear evident of the infusion of the Holy Spirit. The inspired and intelligible utterances of the transformed apostles contrasted the unintelligible babble associated with the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. Notwithstanding the fact that people spoke different languages, they understood the apostles' message inspired by the Holy Spirit. This was a major improvement to the glossolalia or ecstatic and unintelligible pronouncements of Old Testament prophets. The Holy Spirit enables the breaking down of barriers to human unity and solidarity.

We can hardly speak of Pentecost without mentioning the traditional gifts of the Holy Spirit based on Isaiah 11:2. They are: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, piety, and the fear of the Lord. We need them to overcome our current environment of fear.

The respected theologian, Hans Kung, once stated that before the Holy Spirit can truly take hold of our lives all contrary spirits must be exorcised (*Why I Am Still A Christian*). As we celebrate Pentecost, we pray that all contrary spirits in our lives and in our community will take flight, so that God's Spirit may dwell secure.

Happy birthday, Church!

Fr. Romanus