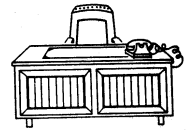


Pentecost Sunday

May 31, 2020



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

This Pentecost Sunday (with the Mass of anticipation) marks our official return to the celebration of the Eucharist since the shutdown orchestrated by the pandemic. While many of us cannot wait to see one another and celebrate as a community, many more are cautious, and rightfully so given the deadly nature of the virus. Obviously, the crisis the world has faced these last few months impacted some people more than others. Overall, there is a sense of fear/trepidation as we begin to gather once more to worship as Church.

Given the current environment of fear, it is most fitting that Archbishop ListECKI chose Pentecost Sunday as our comeback Sunday. We need the fire of the Holy Spirit now more than ever. We need divine inspiration to overcome fear while taking necessary measures to ensure everyone's safety. Our gathering is inspired by our strong faith in God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. For those who do not believe in God, it may seem like foolhardy (being foolishly bold) but we know better. We are audacious but not reckless. The at-risk members unable to join us at this time should not feel less courageous or less inspired. They should rest assured of our spiritual solidarity with them.

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