Pentecost Year C

Acts 2:1-11

This is considered the Birthday of the Universal Church! It is 7 weeks since Easter, a week of weeks. The number 7 shows this to be a time of totality, fullness and completeness.

1. When the time for Pentecost This was one of the three pilgrim feasts that required the adult men of Israel to travel to Jerusalem. It was a harvest festival celebrated 50 days after Passover, when the first loaves of bread from the spring wheat crop were dedicated as a first-fruits offering to the Lord. Over time it also became a celebration of the Torah given to Israel on Mt. Sinai and the resulting Spirit that came on the 70 elders. For Christians, Pentecost celebrates the new law of the Spirit written on the HEARTS of believers, which surpasses the Law of Moses inscribed on STONE TABLETS.
   was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. Acts 1:14-15 tells us that about 120 gathered there and that included some women and Mary the mother of Jesus. They had stayed together in Jerusalem according to Jesus' instructions and had gathered in the "upper room," the same place where the Last Supper had taken place. Pope John Paul II points out that "Pentecost is still happening! In the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome and every Temple, every Oratory, every place where the disciples of the Lord gather, there is an extension of that original Cenacle." It is significant that the followers were *gathered* together for the Holy Spirit continues to come to the Church in her gatherings where we are taught, nourished, and sanctified by the Spirit. Scripture documents six direct interventions of the Holy Spirit: the virginal conception in Matthew, Elizabeth's hymn to Mary under the inspiration of the Holy spirit in Luke, Simeon's inspired prophecy to Mary in Luke, the baptism of Jesus in Matthew, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 1:14 and finally the direction of the Holy Spirit in the laying on of hands in Acts 13. Of these six explicit interventions, Mary is present at four.
   2. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were.
   3.Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. The sound of a mighty wind and the visible fire here on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem recalls the loud and fiery descent of Yahweh on Mt. Sinai during the Exodus: "On the morning of the third day there were peals of thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled…Mount Sinai was all wrapped in smoke, for the Lord came down upon it in fire."(Ex.19:16-19) St. John Chrysostom explains that separate tongues of fire came down on each of them: they were "separated, which means they came from one and the same source, to show that the Power all comes from the Paraclete." The fire symbolizes the action of the Holy Spirit who, by enlightening the minds of the disciples, enables them to understand Jesus' teachings, by inflaming their hearts with love he dispels their fear and moves them to preach boldly. Fire also has a purifying effect, God's action cleansing the soul of all trace of sin.
   4. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit In his Encyclical, Pope John Paul II points out that when Christ gives us his body and blood in the Eucharist, he also gives us his Spirit.

and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. This gift of foreign languages is probably not the same as the gift of "speaking with tongues". This gift reversed the Tower of Babel where God used multiple languages to confuse and scatter the family of man. Here, the Spirit uses multiple languages to communicate the gospel and gather together the family of God.

5. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. There were Jewish pilgrims in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. The international gathering of Jews foreshadows the international acceptance of the gospel by Gentiles from all over the world.

6. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Those filled with the Holy Spirit were praising God in languages which they had not learned nor possibly even heard but which the Jewish pilgrims from every land of the Diaspora recognized with amazement as the tongues of their home countries.

7. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? This was an early name for Christians. Jesus and all of the Apostles except Judas Iscariot (who was from Judea) were from the area of Galilee.

8. Then how does each of us hear them in his native language?

9. We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, These three were from the area of Iran and Iraq inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,

10. Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, A number of these were located in Asia Minor. Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, These two were North African coastal territories. as well as travelers from Rome,

11. both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, These two seem to have been thrown in for good measure so that there is a fulfillment of Is. 66:18: "I come to gather nations of every language." yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God. J. Escriva has pointed out that "Every generation of Christians needs to redeem, to sanctify, its own time…We Christians are called upon to announce to this world to which we belong and in which we live, the message—old, and at the same time new—of the Gospel." By nightfall, no less than 3,000 of these pilgrims had been baptized. The importance of this conversion of substantial numbers of pilgrims who would soon be returning to their own homes in distant lands and could spread the Faith there has often been missed because we have no specific information about what any of them did. But this fact probably explains why, for instance, there are indications of Christianity in the Parthian realm as far back as we can trace Western contacts with it, after Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13

Here St. Paul takes up a new theme—the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the close connection between them and the doctrine of the mystical body.

Brothers and sisters:

3. No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. This provides a general principle for discerning signs of the Holy Spirit—recognition of Christ as Lord. It follows that the gifts of the Holy Spirit can never go against the teaching of the Church. To be in touch with Christ, we must first have been touched by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit empowers

us to say it with conviction and live it out through conversion. The title "Lord" resonates against the background of Jewish and Gentile traditions: (1) it is used repeatedly in the Greek OT to translate the divine name "Yahweh"; (2) it was used in the Greco-Roman world to address rulers and emperors.(10) By attributing to Jesus the divine title "Lord," the first confessions of the Church's faith affirm from the beginning that the power, honor, and glory due to God the Father are also due to Jesus.

4. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit, The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit given at baptism are: WISDOM *Seeing things as God sees them, not as the world sees them. It means putting God first, then people, then things.* UNDERSTANDING *Having a kind heart and a willingness to listen to others. It means knowing a person's good points and bad points and being ready to challenge them, encourage them, and forgive them.* COUNSEL (or right judgment) *Ability to make wise decisions. It means seeking advice from others to help us make good choices and forming our consciences correctly according to what the Church teaches.* FORTITUDE (or courage) *Strength to do what is right even in the face of opposition. This gift can help us be true witnesses to Christ, like St. Maximilian Kolbe in the Auschwitz death camp, or Cassie Bernall, the Columbine High School student who bravely proclaimed her belief in God at the point of a gun and was shot to death.* KNOWLEDGE *Ability to comprehend the truths of the universe and to put that knowledge to good use. Knowledge can be used for* **good** *such as finding a cure for some disease or a way to make God's love and message better known or for* evil *such as making weapons of mass destruction or engaging in cloning or embryonic stem cell research.* PIETY (or reverence) *Deep respect for God, for other people, and for all creation. It means such things as reverent behavior in church or taking part in Eucharistic Adoration. Respect for God and for other people is sadly lacking today.* FEAR OF THE LORD (or wonder and awe in God's presence) *Sense of the greatness of God (design and order in the universe), but also His nearness to us especially in the Holy Eucharist. What we should fear is losing eternity with God through unrepented sin.*

5. there are different forms of service Lumen Gentium, a document from Vatican II, points out that "whether charisms (special gifts) be very remarkable or more simple and widely diffused, they are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation since they are fitting and useful for the needs of the church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be rashly desired nor is it from them that the fruits of apostolic labors are to be presumptuously expected."

but the same Lord;

6. there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. While the Spirit has poured out thousands of gifts or charisms for particular needs, there are at least 30 which the Bible describes including: prophecy, faith, ministry, teaching, exhortation (encouragement), giving, leadership, mercy, healing, discernment of spirits, interpretation of tongues, apostles, helpers, redemptive suffering, preaching, deliverance, celibacy, Gospel poverty, intercession, and hospitality.

7. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given Paul apparently considers that a baptized person who would not have received some manifest gift of the Spirit to be an anomaly. The normal Christian life is charismatic. However, the action of the Holy Spirit can pass unnoticed because man's sin clouds over the divine gifts. These gifts, like muscle, must be used or they will be lost. Some of these gifts are for the lifetime of the person and others are for a particular occasion or season. The Giver of the gifts is always more to be sought than the gifts themselves.

for some benefit. All the gifts are granted to the advantage of the community, not for the profit or promotion of the recipients—so that no one should boast of his 'gift.'
12.As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. Here St. Paul is identifying the Church with Christ.
13.For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, The Holy Spirit is the life-principle of the Church. What the soul is to the body, the Holy Spirit is to the Mystical body of Christ, which is the Church.
whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, Union with Christ makes ethnic and social distinctions irrelevant in the eyes of God. and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. There are several places in Scripture that compare the outpouring of the spirit to drink, dew, rain and living water, indicating that the effects of his presence are to revive the parched soul.

There is a choice of gospel readings for today. Since John 20:19-23 was part of the selection for the Second Sunday of Easter this year, we will comment on the other selection.

John 15:26-27, 16:12-15

This reading is composed of two short sections about the Spirit from Jesus' Last Supper discourse. The thrust of both sections is the role of the Spirit in enabling the church to understand the teaching of Jesus and to testify in his name to all the world.

Jesus said to his disciples:
26. "When the Advocate Which is sometimes translated as " Paraclete," and means literally, "he who is called to one's side." It could be translated as "Mediator," or "Helper." Here it is a term for the Holy Spirit.
comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. The Holy Spirit will complete the revelation of Christ by enlightening the Church concerning the true and full meaning of what Jesus had done and said. Stephen Ray writes about the question, "If you had the choice of either a video of Christ's entire life, or the four existing Gospels, which would you prefer?" The first reaction is to choose the video but he goes on to explain that those who lived during the time of Christ and watched him on a daily basis did not understand him nor his teaching, including his own disciples. A video would be interesting but would do little to enlighten us. On the other hand, the Gospels are the life of Christ as interpreted and explained by the Holy Spirit as he instructed and brought it to the memory of the Apostles according to this promise in John 14:26: "The Holy Spirit …will instruct you in everything, and remind you of all that I told you."
27. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning. Just before the Ascension our Lord will again charge the Apostles with the mission to bear witness to him. They have been witnesses to the public ministry, Death and Resurrection of Christ, which is a condition for belonging to the Apostolic College, as we saw when Matthias was elected to take the place of Judas. But the public preaching of the Twelve and the life of the Church does not start until the Holy Spirit comes. Since the Holy Spirit is also our Advocate, we too are called to be witnesses. William F. Barclay lists three characteristics of witness that help us discern its authenticity: it is personal, convinced, and visible. First, in true Christian witness we see evidence that it is personal. Only those who have a profound,

personal, ongoing experience of Jesus will be able to proclaim him credibly. The second characteristic proceeds from the first. It is heartfelt conviction, the kind of conviction we might have difficulty describing in a witness, but no difficulty at all in recognizing. "This person truly believes the message!" we might say. Third, effective witness expresses its personal conviction outwardly. There can be no silent Christian witnesses—a contradiction in terms. Christians whose personal experience of Jesus leads to conviction about Jesus have to testify about Jesus!

12. I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. While the Holy Spirit speaks to and through Christians in every age and place and will continue to do so until the end of time, we understand far less about how to live Christ's love now than we will in the twenty-second century, because our UNDERSTANDING of revelation continues to develop.

13. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, Pope John Paul II wrote that evil grows when we lack recognition of it. He goes on to say that recognizing evil requires holiness. Those who don't see it are blinded by spiritual blockage. On Good Friday, Pope Benedict XVI spoke at the Third Station about a "cult of Satan." He prayed, "Lord, we have lost our sense of sin! Today a slick campaign of propaganda is spreading an inane (defense) of evil, a senseless cult of Satan, a mindless desire for (violation of divine laws and commands), a dishonest and frivolous freedom, exalting impulsiveness, immorality, and selfishness as if they were new heights of sophistication. Lord Jesus, open our eyes: let us see the filth around us and recognize it for what it is!"

he will guide you to all truth. The work of the Spirit counteracts the work of Satan. The Spirit discloses the full meaning of the gospel and continues the teaching mission of Jesus to bear witness to the truth, while Satan spreads deception and falsehood throughout the world. The Church holds that the pope alone or the pope and the bishops united with him are divinely protected from teaching error when they define matters PERTAINING TO FAITH AND MORALS. The guidance of the Spirit is Christ's guarantee that the gospel will not be corrupted, distorted, or misunderstood by the ordained shepherds of the Church during her earthly pilgrimage.

He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming. Prophecy that foretells what is to come is part of the Spirit's function. However, since this was said at the Last Supper, it may refer to the great events that lead up to the Resurrection. It will be up to the Spirit to make sense out of all this not only for the Apostles, but for the people of all the future ages.

14. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you. In oversimplified terms, Jesus is the "what" that is the center of the gospel and the Spirit deals with the "how" Jesus is communicated.

15. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you." Jesus here reveals some aspects of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. He teaches that the three divine Persons have the same nature when he says that everything that the Father has belongs to the Son, and everything the Son has belongs to the Father and that the Spirit also has what is common to the Father and the Son, that is, THE DIVINE ESSENCE. The activity specific to the Holy Spirit is that of glorifying Christ, reminding and clarifying for the disciples everything the Master taught them. He is also saying that when men give glory to Christ, it is the same as giving glory to God.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Acts of the Apostles," (2) "The Founding Of Christendom" by Warren H. Carroll, (3) Encyclical: "Ecclesia De Eucharistia" by Pope John Paul II, (4) "The Navarre Bible: Acts of the Apostles," (5) "Catechism of the Catholic Church," (6) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (7) "Saint Joseph Commentary On The Sunday Readings" by Achille DeGeest, O.F.M., (8) "The Sunday Epistles And Gospels" by Monsignor Patrick Boylan, (9) "The Navarre Bible: Corinthians," (10) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (11) "Catholic Replies" by James J. Drummey, (12) "Christian Initiation And Baptism In The Holy Spirit" by Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, (13) "Seek The Gifts Of The Spirit" Published by Presentation Ministries, (14) "Discover Your Spiritual Gift And Use It" by Rick Yohn, (15) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2003" by Aelred R. Rosser, (16) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John," (17)"The Navarre Bible: St. John," (18) "Catholic Bible Study: John" by Stephen K. Ray, (19)"The Jerome Biblical Commentary", (20) "Memory and Identity" by John Paul II, and (21) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 1997" by Lawrence E. Mick.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.