

Commentary on the Readings for June 4, 2017

The Feast of Pentecost

Today the entire Church celebrates the great Feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the pouring out of His graces and benefits on all the baptized. This is the official birthdate of the Church.

Because there are different readings for the Saturday Vigil Mass and the Sunday Masses and they all focus on the event of the first Pentecost. We will use this commentary space to discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in both our individual lives and in God's Plan of Salvation.

Years before Christ, the Jews celebrated Pentecost as an annual harvest festival. The word Pentecost comes from the Greek translation for "fifty days," meaning fifty days after the Jewish feast of Passover. For this celebration Jews from all over the world (primarily the Roman empire) came to Jerusalem for the feast. Because Jesus' death and resurrection occurred at Passover Time and His Ascension was forty days later and nearing the celebration of Pentecost, God used this Jewish holiday to bring forth the next great gift to mankind, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The reference to "confusion" in the Tower of Babel story in the First Reading (Saturday Vigil Mass) contrasts with the "amazement and delight" of the people in the Second Reading (Sunday Masses). The first is a negative caused by evil intent, but the second is a positive caused by the Holy Spirit's coming for the benefit of all mankind. Prior to Christ's death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit was not available to man, but now He is being poured out on all mankind for our benefit, grace and spiritual direction.

The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity (and God) now takes up His role in God's Plan of Salvation. After Jesus Christ established the groundwork for the Church and left it in the hands of His apostles, He promised to remain with them forever (**Matt: 28:20**). This could not be done in physical form because His human nature was subject to the limitations of all human beings. So He is with us in the spiritual form of the Holy Spirit and continues to be with the Church (the People of God) forever. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost after Jesus' Ascension marks the official beginning of the Catholic Church, and we celebrate it as the *birthday* of the Church.

The Holy Spirit's role is to guide and guard the institutional Church, and each of us as individuals, back to the Father to be united with Him forever when our time on earth is over. This sounds clear and easy enough, but unfortunately many people do not listen to the Holy Spirit trying to direct them. Such neglect is the cause of most of our worldly, as well as, personal problems. You are encouraged to pray to the Holy Spirit daily for His guidance and direction and to understand what it is that God would like from you as your part in His Plan of Salvation. Something to think about during your Prayer Time this week! **MFB**