



Pentecost: 23rd May 2021

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke of the marvels of God”

This week and next I will be going to my former Parish to help with the Sacrament of Reconciliation; it will be the first experience of Confession and receiving this wonderful Sacrament of Forgiveness for some of the young ones, and for others it will take place in preparation for another Sacrament, Confirmation. It will all happen rather quietly in school, but I expect there will be some way of marking the occasion in a celebratory way too. It is the Sacrament that will be there for those young people throughout their lives, that they can turn to again and again to be reconciled to God, to be healed of sin and be at peace.

This is one of the marks of the coming of the Holy Spirit that we celebrate at Pentecost, and it is central to the account given us in the Gospel of St John this Sunday. Though the focus is on the power to forgive, and that is awesome enough, given by the Risen Jesus to his disciples, and celebrated by Priests to whom it has been passed on down the ages, the fact is forgiveness is to be a mark of all Christians, at all times as we see elsewhere in the Gospels. In our present troubled world where conflict between peoples is all too evident, the Christians, for example in the Middle East, are the hope for the future of nations, and recognized as such by many. The healing power of forgiveness through the Holy Spirit and the Peace that comes with it is one of the causes for celebration at Pentecost.

Another is the power of the Holy Spirit to transform our world through people of Faith in the Risen Jesus becoming one in him whatever language they speak; whatever nationality or culture they inherit. That is the focus of the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the reading that marks the Birth of the Church: one community out of many and all proclaiming “the marvels of God”. What seemed like a mighty wind and tongues of fire marked the gathering of the Apostles as they received the coming of the Holy Spirit, who empowered them, and dispelled their fear to proclaim the truth they had come to know through all Jesus had revealed.

Preparing for this Feast the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin in Ireland had a prayer to the Holy Spirit that included this verse:

“Come, Holy Spirit, free us from fear and fill us with holy courage as you did for the infant Church so that your Church may proclaim the Good News to the men and women of today to the ends of the earth”.

The third reading for Solemnity of Pentecost focusses on the different gifts that each of us has in the Church community. The reading is from St Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians: he sets out saying “no one can say “Jesus is Lord” unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit”. And he goes on “the particular way in which the Spirit is

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given to each person is for a good reason” and he uses a favourite image of his for the Church, the body with many parts, making up the Body of Christ.

It may come as a relief to you to know that you don’t have to be a charismatic speaking in tongues, a unique gift; but you do need to discern your special gifts and use them in the service of Lord. Let us thank God then for the gifts that are given to us and celebrate them, praying the Alleluia Verse of the Mass for Pentecost:

“Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love”.

The gift of love is the unique gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift we all receive. Perhaps we can make our own this verse of the Kildare and Leighlin prayer.

“Come Holy Spirit, who filled the unborn John the Baptist with joy in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth.

Fill all the baptized with the joy of our calling and a new desire to witness in the world”.
Amen

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