

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES

Reflection for

Pentecost Sunday, Year A, 31 May 2020

(May be used for Home Prayer Service)

Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

THE SPIRIT IS THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

Today is the fiftieth day after Easter. In today's celebration, we commemorate that day in which Christ fulfilled his promise by sending the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. On that day, the apostles received the gift of heaven. The Gospel Reading of today then speaks of how the Holy Spirit drives out fear from them and filled them with courage to preach the risen Christ.

From Easter to Pentecost: That Pentecost is linked with Easter means that the Holy Spirit continues the work of Christ in the Church. It is not the case of an administrator taking over from the predecessor with whom there is no administrative relation. Rather, the Holy Spirit, promised by Christ, comes into the Church to give constant direction to her universal mission.

Pentecost: The Birth of the Church: More so, Pentecost recalls the birth of the Church in time. At the event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the apostles who were the first members of the Church were manifested to the world through their fearless preaching to all peoples (cf. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* n. 2). This courageous preaching has always characterised the Church through the ages. The Church of Christ then becomes the New Israel of God, God's holy people, whom he has called from darkness into his own wonderful light (cf. 1 Pt 2:9).

The Spirit Enlivens and Transforms the Church: Two symbols of the Holy Spirit are identified in the description of the event of the Pentecost in the First Reading: wind and fire. Wind, from its Hebrew root, *ru'ah*, also means life or breath. Thus, the apostles were given a new life in the waters of the spirit. This becomes clearer when we relate the wind with the water of the sea. The wind and water then signify the sacrament of baptism in the Church. Also, the Holy Spirit descended on them as tongues of fire. Here, fire symbolises the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions in the Church (cf. CCC 696). With the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Holy Spirit transforms us into instruments of Christ's salvation in the world.

The Spirit Renews the Church: While the human aspect of the Church may become weary and fainted, the Spirit renews the Church and energises her with new strength from heaven. The Spirit renews us in our moments of spiritual weakness. He strengthens us when the burdens of life seem unbearable. He gives us the vigour to live one day at a time until the Lord comes.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit renews in the sacrament of reconciliation. After infusing them with his own Spirit, Christ gave authority to his apostles to reconcile peoples to God. This authority is exercised in the sacrament of penance. In this sacrament, humans experience the mercy of God.

The Spirit Unites us in Christ: That different peoples were able to hear the Good News of Christ in their various languages from the apostles indicates that the mission of the Church is universal. No one is excluded in this mission. Indeed, in Christ, there is no discrimination of any sort because we all have become children of God through faith in Christ (cf. Gal 3:28). This unity in the Spirit is contrary to the event of the Tower of Babel when humans rebelled against God and could no longer understand one another's language (cf. Gen 11:1-9). However, in the Spirit of God, we all can understand one another because all of us have been given the same Spirit to drink from (cf. 1 Cor 12:13). We may speak many human languages, but in Christ, we speak one language of love and peace.

Likewise, St Irenaeus likens the unitive action of the Holy Spirit to the moisture that is needed to make flour rise into a dough. Without the water of the Holy Spirit which comes from heaven, we cannot be united in Christ. The highest form of the expression of this unity in the Church is in the celebration of the Eucharist. Here, Christ feeds us from the One Loaf (His Body) and the One Chalice (His Blood) for eternal life.

As we gather to celebrate this sacrament of unity in the Spirit, may the Father draw us to Himself through Christ his Son. Amen.