

Feast of Pentecost
May 24, 2015
Acts 2:1-11; Gal 5:16-25; John 15:26-27; 16:12-15

Pentecost is the Jewish feast of harvest, 50 days after Passover, when the full blessings of God's rescue of the Hebrews from Egypt are remembered and celebrated.

The Christian adaptation of this important feast reflects the same themes, as fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus, which for us has become the new Passover — not just from historical slavery, but from sin and death. The gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out on the church are the new harvest, empowering disciples to sow the word of God throughout the whole world.

Luke's account of Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles also repeats the story of the Incarnation at the start of his Gospel. Just as the Holy Spirit enabled Mary to conceive and give birth to Jesus, so at Pentecost the Spirit conceives and gives birth to the church, the body of Christ in the world.

This is why it was important for Luke to place Mary among the disciples in the upper room praying for the coming of the Spirit. Mary's faith helped to inspire the faith of the disciples, who must say yes, as she did, for the church to be born.

We also hear in the Acts of the Apostles, that the apostles received the Holy Spirit in the symbols of fire and wind, and they immediately left the safety of the Upper Room to proclaim the Good News. The apostles were doing exactly what Jesus did before He was put to death. They were risking their lives, losing their lives, for the Kingdom of God. They gave up their safe place, for the safety of the Kingdom.

It is easy to stay in a safe place. It is easy to cling to our comfort level. But Christ continually calls us out of the Upper Rooms of our lives. He continually calls us to embrace the challenges of the Gospel.

We have our group, our safe place. Perhaps our safe place is populated by the popular crowd in school, at work, in the neighborhood. Perhaps the goal of so many of their lives is nothing more than to live for themselves. They embrace and glorify the watered-down values of a material world. And we're comfortable being with them.

Why should we be the one who is different? Why should we be the one who is going to challenge values? And then Jesus calls us out of the Upper Room. He calls us to be different, to be holy. He calls us to be the one who embraces virtue. He calls us into the insecurity of proclamation.

We have listened to Christ's command, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Each of us received the Holy Spirit at Baptism and Confirmation. The Spirit's gifts are awesome. Remember them? Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. We must learn them and to use them. Daniel Durken said the Holy Spirit came to dispel the A,B,C, and Ds that can poison our lives - apathy, boredom, coldness, and dullness.

We are the hands and feet, eyes and ears, voice and touch of Jesus. The risen Jesus gave the apostles the power to forgive and to give God's peace. Their mission is now our mission.

The Spirit promises that the power of Jesus will be effective in our witness. But, like Mary, we need to say yes and then remain faithful so the mystery can unfold over time.

And even though Pentecost represents the conclusion of the Easter season, isn't the end but the beginning of the story of Jesus, extended in history through us. When we receive the Eucharist, we become the Incarnation for our time and place. The Eucharist fills us with the life of God, but also gives us a share of the seed meant for sowing so there will be more harvests.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary if we are to move St. Joseph Church from maintenance to mission...