Homily for Pentecost Sunday 2026 Year A

The Gospels over the past few weeks have shown us Christ preparing His disciples for the time He must leave them to return to His Father.

He promises to send them the Holy Spirit. He fervently prays that they may be one, and that they be grounded In the love that unites the Father and Himself.

And there they were, lost by his absence, huddled together in the upper room riddled with fear, fear of the Jews. Not much of a beginning for the Church!

And then suddenly, and St. Luke is almost lost for words to describe it, the whole room is filled with a roaring sound of a rushing wind and flashes of light and fire that illuminates each apostle.

The noise attracts a large crowd that gathers outside of the house. And then what a transformation! Out come the Apostles, brimming over with confidence and enthusiasm. Fear is a thing of the past, and each is bubbling over with something, perhaps joy. There is no holding them back. They each begin to preach and no matter what the mother tongue of each listener, they are able to understand perfectly what each Apostle is saying. Language ceases to be a barrier.

The Church begins in an explosion of spiritual power and energy. The Apostles are as one. They have that unity that Christ prayed for, a clear vision and purpose, one Gospel that falls upon the eager ears of all who hear it.

Well, almost 2000 years later, it is the same Holy Spirit, but look what the human element of made of that vision.

On the one hand, history shows us that Christians have erected fierce divisions between each other in matters of belief and practise. They have been guilty of the torture and murder of all who would not follow their beliefs. They have imposed those beliefs upon others through political force or terror. They have distorted or destroyed other cultures to expand the Christian faith. There have always been those who tried to cynically manipulate the word of God to further their own ends, and sometimes all of that was done with the sincerest of intentions, a sincerity that today we would call blind fanaticism – and for all of that humankind has much to be ashamed of.

On the other hand, history shows us the awesome courage in every century, of those prepared to suffer and even die for their faith. It shows us how the warmth of that Christian love melted the ice of barbarism and contributed in no small way to the

spread of civilization throughout the world. It provided the inspiration for the greatest intellects and the most talented of artists and composers to explore and then share the mystery of God with their fellow man. It motivated human beings to not only die for love of their fellow men, but also to live and work for them in the areas of medical care and education. It raised the lives of countless numbers of people to heroic sanctity and union with God., not just those we have canonised, but those myriad of individuals in every generation and every walk of life known only to God alone - and so we could go on.

What makes the difference between the negative and positive aspects of religion or between Sin and Grace? Between what is worthless and what is worthy in God's sight? Between what passes and what will endure forever?

The answer is the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit that breathes life, health, love, piece, joy, wisdom and sanctity. The Spirit that transforms all human endeavour and activity into something pleasing to God. The Spirit that is God's abiding presence with us, transforming fear into great faith, selfishness into great love, raising man's, hearts and minds in prayer to heights that alone he would be incapable of.

Take God's Spirit away, the wind, the breath, the fire in our lives, and we die, and all our enterprises come to nothing. God will not take his Spirit away. It is a continual gift. It was there at the birth of the Church. We received it in Baptism and continuously throughout our lives through the Sacraments. It comes to us in the day-to-day activities of our lives. But more and more there is a desperate need that we not only open ourselves to the workings of the Holy Spirit, but that we try to be more aware of his Presence and the possible effect it can have on our lives, that we pray to him. And I can think of no more beautiful prayer than the sequence of today's mass that says it all.

Holy Spirit, Lord of Light,

From Thy clear celestial height,

Thy pure beaming radiance give:

Come, Thou Father of the poor!

Come, with treasures which endure!

Come, Thou Light of all that live!

Thou, of all consolers best,
Thou the souls' delightful guest
Dost refreshing peace bestow;
Thou in toil art comfort sweet,
Pleasant coolness in the heat,
Solace in the midst of woe.

Light immortal! Light divine!
Visit Thou these hearts of Thine,
And our inmost being fill;
If thou take thy grace away
Nothing pure in Man will stay
All his good is turned to ill.

Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour Thy dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away;
Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

Thou, on us who evermore
Thee confess and Thee adore,
With Thy sevenfold gifts, descend:
Give us comfort when we die,
Give us life with Thee on high,
Give us joys that never end.