

Sunday, May 24, 2015

Pentecost Sunday

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Acts 2:1-11

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

Responsorial: Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34

Gospel: John 20:19-23

Pentecost, A Time to Say “Yes” to Work of the Holy Spirit and “No” to Fear

The doors were locked. (John 20:19)

Fear can be such a crippling emotion! Think of how many dreams were never realized because someone was afraid of failure. Think of how many relationships never got started because someone was afraid to make the first move.

Now think of the apostles, locked in the upper room “for fear of the Jews” (John 20:19). What if they had never gotten over that fear and remained in Jerusalem? What if the Church had never grown beyond that small group of disciples? You probably wouldn’t be reading this meditation! We know, of course, that this didn’t happen. That’s why we are celebrating Pentecost today. Empowered by the Spirit, the apostles did overcome their fears. And because of their boldness, all of history has been transformed by the message of God’s love and salvation.

But what of us, who are also called to witness our faith? Maybe we should ask ourselves, as Pope Francis did recently, “Are we open to ‘God’s surprises’? Or are we closed and fearful before the newness of the Holy Spirit?”

It may sound simplistic, but we don’t have to be afraid. God is with us, and as the Holy Father has said, he has wonderful surprises waiting for us if we step out in faith.

This week, let the Lord surprise you—and take a risk by acting on the surprise. If you feel a renewed urge to share your faith, don’t stifle it. If you feel called to pray for someone’s healing or reach out to someone in distress, follow that leading. Try to put your anxieties aside and do what you sense the Lord is asking you to do. You’ll find great freedom, even if you take just one small step of trust in the Lord. Not only that, but God will take this tiny step of faith and turn it into a giant leap forward—for you and for the person you are reaching out to!

“Lord, may the fire of your Spirit burn away every fear that I have. May I follow without hesitation wherever you are leading me!”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. The account in Acts 2 of the First Reading describes the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost. Through this miraculous work, we see the Holy Spirit becoming the unifier of the Church. We too have received that same Spirit. In what ways can you fan into flame in a deeper way the Holy Spirit who was given to you at your Baptism and Confirmation? In what ways can you use the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life and others to strengthen the unity of your parish?
2. The response to the Responsorial Psalm is “Lord, send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.” This renewal begins with each one of us. What renewal does God want to make in your life? In addition, in what ways has the Lord called you, through the power of his Spirit within you, to participate in the mission of the Church to “renew the face of the earth”?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul tells us: “To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit has been given for some benefit.” What “manifestation,” or gifts of the Spirit do you believe you have been given that can be used for the “benefit” of others in your family, your community, and your parish?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus tells the Apostles, “As the Father has sent me so I send you” and then he “breathed” the Holy Spirit on them. Just as he did at Pentecost, Jesus wants to breathe God’s Spirit and power into our hearts every day. The spiritual dynamic that was present at that first Pentecost, moving people to love God, to seek out holiness, and to come together as a church, is still at work today. In what ways have you experienced the work and power of the Holy Spirit that was present at that first Pentecost?
5. Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have reminded us over and over again that the commission that Christ gave the Church in the Gospel was not meant just for the Apostles, but rather for all Catholics. We all share in the responsibility to tell the world of the Good News of God’s love for us in Jesus Christ! In what ways have you been able to respond to this great commission?
6. The meditation begins with these hard-hitting words: “Fear can be such a crippling emotion! Think of how many dreams were never realized because someone was afraid of failure. Think of how many relationships never got started because someone was afraid to make the first move.” The meditation ends with these challenging words to us: “This week, let the Lord surprise you—and take a risk by acting on the surprise. If you feel a renewed urge to share your faith, don’t stifle it. If you feel called to pray for someone’s healing or reach out to someone in distress, follow that leading. Try to put your anxieties aside and do what you sense the Lord is asking you to do.” In what ways can you respond to these challenging words? For example, are there people in your life that need to know the difference faith in Jesus Christ has made in your life? Are there people in your life who need prayers for healing, including healing of relationships? If so, how might the Lord be calling you to respond to these needs?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace, and the power of his Holy Spirit, to overcome any fears that keep you from responding to his call for your life. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmusa.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee’s website: www.nsc-chariscenter.org