

Sunday, May 15, 2016

Pentecost Sunday

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 2:1-11
12-13

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

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

Gospel: John 20:19-23

Experiencing God's Love More Deeply through the Holy Spirit

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:4)

On this great feast, let's go back to the opening article in this magazine. In that article, Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa writes, "The Holy Spirit is the love of God. Within the Trinity, he is the flame of love going from the Father to the Son, and from the Son to the Father."

We may not know exactly how to grasp this exchange of love between the Father and the Son, but we can catch a glimpse of it when we see a loving married couple. Their love for each other is energizing; it's creative, life-giving, and inspiring. They are not closed in on themselves; they are open and welcoming to everyone around them.

Fr. Cantalamessa goes on: "To say that the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit means that they were filled with the love of God. . . . Pentecost was the moment when each of the apostles had the overwhelming experience of being loved by God."

Pentecost, he concludes, "is the moment when, by the grace of God, you realize that you are specially loved by God as his precious son or daughter."

The Holy Spirit wants to fill each of us with experiences of this love, just as he did for the apostles. So take some time today to visualize God's perfect love. Picture it flowing between the Father and the Son without constraints or roadblocks. Then, ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with this love. It doesn't have to be complicated. All you have to do is say something simple like "Holy Spirit, fill me with God's love."

See if you find a new joy in your heart, a deeper sense of peace, or a greater appreciation for Jesus. For the rest of the day, keep asking the Holy Spirit to show you how much God loves you. Like the apostles, you may be overwhelmed by God's presence in your heart. And that's perfectly fine because it's exactly what the Spirit came to do!

"Come, Holy Spirit, and fill me with God's love."

(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 Discussion

1. In the first reading, we recall the events of the day of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' apostles, and the phenomena accompanying it. All the people at this great feast "were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem." Yet when the apostles began to speak, each of the people heard them speaking in their own tongues "of the mighty acts of God." How would you describe "the mighty acts of God"?
2. Through the miraculous work at Pentecost, described in the first reading, we also see the Holy Spirit becoming the unifier of his people in the early church. He is also the unifier for all of us as well. How can you use the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life and others to strengthen the unity within your parish, with members of other churches, and among your own family members?
3. The responsorial psalm speaks of God renewing the face of the earth. This renewal begins with each one of us, and is an ongoing process of transformation into the image and likeness of Christ. How would you describe the ongoing renewal that God may want to do in your life? How can you open yourself more to this renewal?
4. The second reading reminds us that the Holy Spirit works in each of us differently in order to benefit the whole Church: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit." What gifts do you feel you have been given that can be used in a greater way to build up the Church? How can you also use them for the benefit of others in your family and friends, in your neighborhood, and at work?
5. In the Gospel, Jesus' first words to the disciples after his resurrection were words of consolation and reassurance: "peace be with you." Jesus desires to speak these words every day to each of us. In the midst of the many distractions, and the busyness of our day, it is easy to lose our peace. What are the obstacles in you that can keep you from experiencing the Lord's peace? What are some practical steps you can take to overcome these obstacles?
6. The meditation quotes these words of Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa: "To say that the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit means that they were filled with the love of God. . . . Pentecost was the moment when each of the apostles had the overwhelming experience of being loved by God." Fr. Raniero goes on to say that Pentecost "is the moment when, by the grace of God, you realize that you are specially loved by God as his precious son or daughter. The Holy Spirit wants to fill each of us with experiences of this love, just as he did for the apostles." What steps can you take to open yourself to a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit and a deeper experience of God's love?

7. Take some time now to pray and ask for a deeper infilling of the Holy Spirit in your life, and a greater experience of God's love. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as a 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.]