

Sunday, June 9, 2019

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, Celebrating the Gift of the Holy Spirit and Jesus' Call for Our Lives

As the Father has sent me, so I send you. (John 20:21)

Today we celebrate what is perhaps the most valuable gift God has ever given us: the Holy Spirit. Why would we say that? Because it's the exact same gift that God gave Jesus at his baptism. Remember the scene? Just as Jesus comes out of the water, the heavens part, and the Holy Spirit descends upon him in the form of a dove.

Imagine that—God loves you and treasures you so much that he thinks you should receive the same blessings he has given his own Son. No second-rate gifts for you; only the best will do!

When he poured out the Spirit on Jesus, God also told him, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). This is another blessing that he shares with you! Day after day, God wants to give you the confidence of knowing that you too are his own beloved child.

But Pentecost is about more than what God has given you. It's also about how God is sending you. Remember, Jesus told his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). So if the Father sent Jesus out with the Spirit, he is sending you the same way. Not on your own, but equipped with all the Spirit's grace and power. He's not expecting you to do all the work by yourself. His Spirit is always with you, offering you his strength, his guidance, and his confidence to help you.

But just what is Jesus sending you out to do? Again, the same thing God sent him to do: to be a witness to his mercy. He is sending you out to show his love by treating people with the same kindness and mercy he has shown to you.

Mercy. Love. Patience. Forbearance. These are the marks of everyone who has been filled with the Spirit. They are the gifts that God wants to fill you with today.

“Father, thank you for the wonderful gift of your Holy Spirit!”

(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 first reading begins with these words: *And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement*
 - What do you believe is the significance of the dramatic way the events of the Day of Pentecost are described?
 - Each of us, as baptized and confirmed Catholics, has also received the Holy Spirit. Do you believe that the Lord wants to give you a deeper infilling of his Spirit? If not, why not? If so, how can this happen?
 - Why do you think the Pentecost witnesses were *confused, astounded, and in amazement*? What do you think your reaction would have been?
2. The response to the responsorial psalm is *Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.*
 - How would you describe the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing the face of the earth?
 - What areas in your life would you like the Holy Spirit to renew in a deeper way?
3. In the second reading, we hear these words: *Brothers and sisters: No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. 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. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.*
 - Why do you think, *No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit*?
 - What *different kinds of spiritual gifts* do you believe you have received from the Holy Spirit that can benefit your family, your parish, and others?
 - What do these words from the reading mean to you: *As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body*?
 - What steps can you take, individually or as a group, to bring more unity to your parish or with other Christians?
4. In the Gospel reading, we hear these words: *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*
 - How important were Jesus' words of assurance to his fearful disciples? What was their impact?
 - In what ways do you believe that just as Jesus was "sent" by the Father, he is also sending you out as a witness to a broken and fallen world?
 - Why do you believe it is first necessary to "Receive the Holy Spirit" before you can do this?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading. It ends with these words: "So if the Father sent Jesus out with the Spirit, he is sending you the same way. Not on your own, but equipped with all the Spirit's grace and power. He's not expecting you to do all the work by yourself. His Spirit is always with you, offering you his strength, his guidance, and his confidence to help you. But just what is Jesus sending you out to do? Again, the same thing God sent him to do: to be a witness to his mercy. He is sending you out to show his love by treating people with the same kindness and mercy he has shown to you."
 - What are some practical steps you can take to respond to the Lord's words from the Gospel and bring the Lord's love, mercy, and kindness to others?
 - What are the obstacles in you that keep you from doing this? What steps can you take to overcome them through the power of the Holy Spirit, which dwells in you?

Take some time now to pray and thank your Heavenly Father for filling you with his Holy Spirit so that you can answer his call to be his ambassador and his witness to others. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

"Father, thank you for the wonderful gift of your Holy Spirit!"

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]