

“Pentecost: The Harvest of the Spirit”

In our preface for Mass today, we will pray these words to the Father: “Today you sent the Holy Spirit on those marked out to be your children by sharing the life of your only Son, and so you brought the paschal mystery to its completion.”

Among the truths expressed in this prayer:

1. Today: an historical event, in fact, 50 days following the resurrection on a day called Pentecost.
2. Pentecost was one of the three great festival of the Jewish religious calendar, when all the male members of the Jewish nation were to appear before the Lord God. It was the feast of harvest, of the first fruits of the land and required them to offer a portion of these fruits to the Lord.
3. Continuing with the prayer, we become children of the Father through our union with Christ, which is the work of the Holy Spirit. May this profound mystery penetrate our minds: children of the Father, His beloved. Brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus, to whom is extended to us the gift of friendship and communion. Tabernacle of the Holy Spirit--the breath of God living within us, speaking in our hearts, with inspiration, warning, comfort. For God, all things are possible, including our union with Him, our capacity to be pleasing to Him, the possibility of serving Him with our lives, the offer to be with Him forever in glory.
4. You brought the paschal mystery to its completion. What was this mystery, this work of Christ? First, by His dying He destroyed our death, ransoming us by the sacrifice of Himself from the death of eternal separation from God caused by sin. Second, by His rising He restored our life; He offers justification through faith in Him which is a share in His life, making us adopted children of the Father. Third, by His ascension, He enters into heaven with a human nature, thereby

providing the means for us to enter into heaven and eternal glory through our union with Him. Finally, sending the Spirit, He empowers His followers to continue His saving work on earth: to be and build the Church, to give the gift of forgiveness of sin through baptism, to create the communion of saints through the Eucharist, to enable the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting through life in the Spirit.

You brought the paschal mystery to its completion. You Father, in the gift of your Spirit, have brought this saving work of Jesus Christ to completion. His purpose for coming into the world, His work of restoring creation, of unifying the human family, of opening the gift of union with you through the Church until the end of the ages is now complete. Everything has been accomplished. Everything has been provided. We praise you Father, for what you have done for us.

Down through the ages, the people of God have considered this day, Pentecost Sunday, as the birthday of the Church. It is the day of new beginning. What was formerly a celebration of the harvest of the fields now becomes the celebration of the harvest of the Spirit. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples went forth from the upper room, sharing the message of redemption achieved in Christ to the known ends of the world. Under the guidance of the Spirit, who opened their hearts to remember what the Lord had done and taught them, who opened their minds to understand what God desires of His children, the apostles and their followers gave their hearers the gifts of life in Christ, union with God and the pledge of sharing in eternal glory. The first fruits of the Spirit were the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and

Arabs, each of them hearing of the mighty works of God spoken to them in their own tongue.

Pentecost marks the beginning of the Church, of the life of the followers of Christ now functioning under the guidance of the Spirit. The Church is life in the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Spirit is the source of communion with God and the unity of the followers with one another. The Spirit is the wisdom of God, protecting the believing community from error, inspiring this community to do new things, arduous things, mysterious things for the glory of God. The Spirit is the holiness of God who sanctifies us, our sacrifices and our material things so that we might become holy and be drawn into deeper union with God. The Spirit is the source and the means of our life in God.

The message I wish to leave with you today is this: listen to, learn from and live in the Spirit of God. In this way we find the Church, we find our mission in life, and we walk in holiness of life to our final end, which is eternal glory.

This listening, learning and living is impossible without a lifeline. Think of it in mechanical terms if you wish, a power source or an oxygen lead that comes into our system and feeds us on a regular basis. I was talking with a friend earlier this week and she told me about purchasing and downloading books on her iPod. She downloaded George Weigel's *Witness to Hope* on Pope John Paul II, and a couple different books by Scott Hahn. She listens to these on the way to work and on the way home, every day. It is a half hour or more of listening, to and from work, a tool which enables her to connect with supernatural realities, the things of God, our faith, and our Church. Out of this experience came the remarkable grace this week

to extend mercy with one of her coworkers who has been a source of profound suffering in her life.

We cannot live in the Spirit unless we feed our spirit with the Spirit of God. We need to give the Spirit of God time, our attention, our listening heart. I know this: life is unmanageable without God. With God, everything is manageable, every suffering can be born, every uncertainty can be lived. In God is our peace. With God we receive the insight to know precisely the path He wants us to walk, and the grace we need to walk it, to rise again when we fall from it, and to journey forward in faith. It is only in this way, in living life in the Spirit, that we discover the Church and share its Pentecost, which is the celebration of the harvest of the Spirit.