

Reflections on Pentecost

Pentecost is the birthday of our Church, a time when we Catholics should celebrate and rejoice. However, as we gather this weekend, there is great heaviness in our hearts. We witness daily:

- The suffering of the Holy Father
- The suffering of the Church from clergy who committed crimes of abuse against minors
- The suffering of the Church from attacks against us because of these crimes and how they were handled
- The suffering of the Church due to the burdens of so many of our members carrying the crosses of sickness, separation from loved ones, death, the loss of jobs and economic insecurity
- The suffering of people within our communities, ravaged by the tension and uncertainty of tomorrow, reacting to this pressure in inappropriate and destructive ways
- The suffering of the immigrant element of the Church, especially in the United States
- The suffering of parents whose children no longer practice the faith
- The suffering in many peoples' lives because they no longer practice the faith
- The suffering of parish priests who carry these burdens in the communities entrusted to their care.

Simultaneously, members of the Catholic Church in the United States are witnessing the aggressive effort of government to impose secular humanism on us. One is reminded of the warning by Pope Benedict XVI in *Spe Salvi* of the danger and futility of attempting to achieve a just social order without God. Yet, we are well down this path which will end in the tyranny of the powerful and widespread human suffering. Only the rich will survive. They can leave, and will.

The forces operating on the Catholic heart could crush us. They would, except for our faith. God is here. He is more powerful than all the world's evil. He has conquered the world.

History reminds us of the ways our fathers in the faith dealt with these situations. They journeyed in the midst of the suffering world, convinced by the interior impulse of faith that walking humbly with God allows His transforming power to flow. God would change the world. In the mean time, they practiced charity, they remained united in prayer, they avoided the extremes of despair and violence. They worked to root out sin in their life. They drew near to Mary. They pursued holiness.

The hearts of Jesus and Mary have conquered the world. To date, they have yet to triumph in the hearts of all mankind. That alone remains, and it is coming. Makes you smile, doesn't it?
Happy Birthday!