

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



Pentecost Sunday – June 4, 2006 B

PENTECOST - THE POURING OUT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON ALL CREATION AND THE BIRTHDAY OF OUR CHURCH.

Reflecting on today's feast, Fr. Joseph Krempa writes:

Today we celebrate the great solemnity of Pentecost. Originally, it was a Jewish feast of the harvest. We know it as the birth of the Church when the Holy Spirit came down in wind and flame to transform the Apostles and disciples into great missionaries of the Gospel and make of them a Church, a kind of Easter harvest.

Pentecost is the event when the Holy Spirit was given to the Church to make her and keep her one, to make her and keep her holy, to make her and keep her apostolic, to make her and keep her catholic or universal. With this celebration of the Holy Spirit and the Church, we may miss an important dimension to Pentecost and that is the Holy Spirit and us.

We can look for the Holy Spirit only in the grand historical places of history, in the lives of prophets, popes, in the doings of ecumenical councils and great moments in the life of the Church or miraculous healings and overlook the daily presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Each of us received the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation to enable us to live a courageous Christian life. The Holy Spirit within gives us the courage to withstand the negative influences of our culture: wisdom to look past so much of the foolishness and shortsightedness that surround us, knowledge to apply the Gospel to our lives, understanding to comprehend the deep truths of Christ and the truth that the importance of our life in God's sight may be vastly different from what others may think of us.

These are the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit that enable us to live the Christian life. With the state of the world around us as it is, we have the words of Jesus, "He that is in you is greater than he who is in the world." We have a presence, a source of renewal, revival, refreshment given to us, the Holy Spirit, which we can miss if we limit the presence of the Holy Spirit only to the great events in the life of the Church and forget that He is part of our life as well.

Pope St. Leo had a remarkable sermon on Pentecost in which he said that Pentecost is not the first appearance of the Holy Spirit. After all, the Spirit hovered over the waters in Genesis, the Spirit spoke

through the prophets, and Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. What is unique about Pentecost, says Pope St. Leo, is not the gift of the Holy Spirit but the extent of the gift. Now the Holy Spirit is given not just to kings and prophets but to every Christian. We should try to appreciate this great interior gift, planted in our soul by the risen Lord.

Whatever happens in our life, whatever roads we may travel, the Holy Spirit is present as conscience, as repentance, as a way back, as an inner moral compass, as an urge to pray, as the desire to forgive, as a concern for someone who has experienced tragedy, as outrage against injustice, as direction for the future.

The Holy Spirit is present not just in tongues of fire or in extraordinary charismatic gifts. We terribly underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit if we limit the Spirit's presence only to extraordinary gifts. Far more important than the extraordinary gifts are the ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit catalogued by St. Paul in today's second reading. When we try to understand others, when we try to unite rather than divide, when we show courage in not only proclaiming but living the Gospel, when we open our hearts in prayer, when we make wise choices, when we are faithful to our vows and promises, when we appreciate the majesty of God's presence—these are the powerful everyday gifts of the Holy Spirit so often overlooked because we are looking only for something unusual.

If we focus only on the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit (healing, speaking in tongues, prophecies) and pay no attention to the ordinary gifts, we are like a person who is fascinated by the magic of fireworks on the Fourth of July and ignores the miraculous power of sunlight that surrounds us every day.

We can do without fireworks; we cannot do without sunlight. We can achieve great holiness without the extraordinary gifts; we cannot do so without the ordinary gifts. We can live without miracles; we can't live without grace. That is why Scripture compares the Holy Spirit to air, water, light—what is needed for life.

Today we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit given to the Church and to each of us. Pentecost is not just about a single supernatural spiritual explosion on an afternoon in Jerusalem long ago. It's about the life of every one of us Christians. Deep inside us from Baptism and Confirmation burns a flame, maybe just a pilot light, maybe a fire but still a flame, a gift, promised by Jesus as the fulfillment of His Easter and that is the Holy

Spirit. This gift of the Holy Spirit to us means several things.

It means that God is not remote; the Holy Spirit is with us, “in our hearts He takes up His rest.” God is close to us. It means that whatever happens in our life, there is within us the Holy Spirit almost as a “holy enzyme” that can always renew the youth of our soul, whatever the age of our bodies. It means that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. The Spirit of God is greater than the spirit of the world.

The Holy Spirit shows His power not primarily in events that are fantastic but in lives that are faithful. The Holy Spirit is our personal link to what counts, our link to what is right, our personal link to God. The Holy Spirit is Christ’s Easter gift to the Church and to each one of us.

Two Prayers to the Holy Spirit

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my thoughts may all be holy.*

*Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my work, too, may be holy.*

*Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
that I love but what is holy.*

*Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
to defend all that is holy.*

*Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
that I always may be holy.*

Amen. St. Augustine

“O Spirit of God,

*Who once drove Jesus into the desert to pray,
propel me now into prayer and praise.*

*O energy of God, electrify my sluggish
heart to whirl out*

In wonder passionate prayers of God’s love.

*O Holy Spirit, spin me wildly and freely,
dancing in your holy whirlwind,*

as once you revolved within and around Jesus.

*O Enthusiasm of the prophets,
spark me now into flames of zeal to speak for God
in your ever daring and audacious ways.*

*O Expeller of demons, be my holy
broom to sweep out evil spirits
that make my soul and God’s good
world unclean.*

*O Generator of creation, stir up deep
within me heaven’s fiery creativity
in fixing meal in making love in all of life.*

Ed Hays

Wisdom of Our Fathers

If you have been looking at TV lately you have heard

of Tim Russert’s new book called *Wisdom of Our Father’s—Lessons and Letters from Daughters and Sons*.

This book is the result of the 60,000 pieces of mail Tim received after writing *Big Russ and Me* — a book about the lessons he learned from his own father. *Wisdom of Our Fathers* is a sampling of the letters Tim received. Even though many sons and daughters have had negative experiences and memories of their relationship with their father, Tim decided to only include in his book positive stories. This story is called *The Listener*.

My dad was a milkman who got up five days a week at 3 AM. He would drive from Brooklyn, where we lived, to the plant in the Bronx, and then to the Upper East Side of Manhattan to deliver milk.

Because he had to get up in the middle of the night, my father was usually in bed by eight. On Monday nights, my mother would go out to play cards “with the girls.” When she was gone, I would go into my parents’ room and ask Dad if I could speak with him. He always said yes, and we would lie there in his bed as I poured my heart out to him—often about being teased by other kids. He was completely supportive. On any number of occasions, he explained that the torment and embarrassment I was feeling as an adolescent would pass, and that the healthy thing was to let it go and not act on my anger. It was good advice but, more important, he was telling me these things when he was utterly exhausted.

When Mom came home from her evening out, she’d have a fit that Dad was still up. But I will always remember that Dad felt that talking with me was even more important than his rest. He was always there—with advice, an encouraging word, or just a grip of his strong, rough hands.

*-Ira M. Garvin, Oakdale, NY, retired teacher
Son of Leo M. Garvin, milkman (1913-1967)*

Have a blessed week,

Le Garvin