

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

St. John 20:19-23

Today the Church celebrates the fiftieth day of the Resurrection of Our Lord. It is because this is the fiftieth day that the Church calls this solemnity "Pentecost,"; a Greek word meaning fifty days. Ten days after Our Lord ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit descended to earth and was bestowed on the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Apostles.

Just as in the book of Genesis, when God breathed His breath into Adam and gave mankind life, so with the breath of the Holy Spirit, the Church is founded and given life. Without the Holy Spirit, the Church would be reduced to merely a human organisation, weighed down by its own structures. But, for its part, in the plans of God, the Holy Spirit habitually makes use of human mediations to act in history. Precisely for this, Our Lord, who established the Church on the foundation of the Apostles closely around St. Peter, has also given it the gift of the Holy Spirit, so that throughout the centuries He would be the comfort (see *Jn.* 14:16) and the guide to truth (see *Jn.* 16:13).

At the Last Supper, on the night before Our Lord's Passion and Death, He instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and the Priesthood that would offer that sacrifice. Here, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fulfils the institution of the Church and gives to her the power to participate in the fulfillment of the mission of Christ who said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*Mt.* 28:19).

This mission of the Church is our duty because we, by virtue of our Baptism and Confirmation, were drawn into the Church and received the Holy Spirit. We are not members of the Church in order to impose our own will or to

decide what is truth and what is not. We are members of the Church because we see in her the fullness of truth.

Just as, again, at the Last Supper, Our Lord gave us an example of perfect service in the washing of the feet of the Apostles, so we, who are His disciples, seek to fulfill that duty of service to almighty God through His Church. To this end, we are obligated to fulfill the five precepts of the Church: to attend Mass on Sundays—every Sunday—and holy days of obligation, to confess our sins at least once a year, to humbly receive Holy Communion at least during the Easter season, to keep holy the holy days of obligation, and to observe the prescribed days of fasting and abstinence. With these five precepts, we are also obliged to provide for the financial and material needs of the Church, in so far as we are able and with respect to our duties to those for whom we are responsible.

To each of us, God, who has made us in His image and likeness, has granted particular skills, abilities and resources. It is our duty to make use of what Our Lord has given to us, not only for our salvation but for the salvation of others, because in this way we give glory to God by the fulfilling of our humanity. One way in which we are asked to do this is by our service to the Church through the parish. By our volunteering to assist in the parish we contribute to the building up of the Church as asked of us by Our Lord, and we make a sacrifice of ourselves and so share in the sacrifice of Christ. It cannot be left to others to bear the work, each of us must make a contribution so that we build up and not tear down.

Nothing is built up by taking away. To offer service, especially in the parish, is not to seek glory but to offer sacrifice. Sacrifice doesn't bring glory in this world. It didn't for Our Lord. Sacrifice is painful and costs us something, but we do it because we believe in something greater than ourselves, and only in that does glory lie.

We have many fine examples of parishioners who already give generously of their time and who serve across the parish at both of our churches. They are

men and women, boys and girls, who have asked not what they can take from the parish but what they can give to the parish and, by their service, they build up and cultivate what Our Lord has given to us. And we have many people who, over the years, have given an example of dedicated service, and to them, we are grateful for all that they have done for us.

As we celebrate the solemnity of Pentecost and the birth of the Church, we entrust our hope to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and we pray that by her intercession she will guide us and strengthen us in our service to the Church so that, like her, we may stand by the foot of the Holy Cross and give witness to the world.