

Pentecost 2019

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Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council in 1962, by proclaiming ,“open the windows and let in the fresh air“. Yes, he hoped and prayed for a New Pentecost to dawn in the Church.

We all need a revival of the Pentecost experience every day of our lives. St. Paul says in his second letter to Timothy: “I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (1.6). The Holy Spirit is the greatest gift of God which Jesus came to give us. The first mission of Jesus was to forgive us our sins. The angel Gabriel appeared to St. Joseph in a dream and removed his doubt about Virgin Mary’s conception by telling: “do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Mt.1.21). So the primary mission for which God the Father sent Jesus was to save people from the bondage of sin. He came not only for that, but to teach us how to live as the children of God. But that is impossible without the help of the Holy Spirit. “What is born of the flesh is flesh and what is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn.3.6). That is why Jesus told Nicodemus: “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit” (Jn.3.5). But God is all holy and His Spirit cannot enter into us unless we are sanctified. So Jesus had to accomplish His first task of purifying the humanity through His Passion, Death and Resurrection. God “has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col.1.13).

John the Baptist tells about the second mission of Jesus. He

introduced Jesus by saying: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Mt.3.11; Mk.1.8; Lk.3.16; Jn.1.33). Jesus did promise the gift of Holy Spirit to His disciples who would thirst for the Spirit and who would believe in Him (Jn.7.37-39). But the Holy Spirit then made the truth clear for the evangelist: "As yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn.7.39 b). At the last discourse with His disciples Jesus said: "I tell you the truth: it is for your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (Jn.16.7). After His death and Resurrection, Jesus made the truth clear again: "you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts.1.5).

After His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples who were in a closed room for fear of the Jews. He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn.20.22). Even though Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit, their lives did not change. They were still living in fear and doubt, and wanted to go back to their former trade. (Jn.21.3; Lk.24.13-24). The Holy Spirit was in them, but dormant. They were not led to activate the Holy Spirit in them, to be led by the Holy Spirit, nor did they know how to live in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. After the Sacrament of Baptism, most of us also lead such lives without having a lively, daily communion with the Holy Spirit and hence we lead 'frozen' Christian lives. Because of our lack of knowledge of the Word of God (Mk.12.24), we have many misconceptions about the need and the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Before His Ascension, Jesus told the disciples: "I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Lk. 24.49). Jesus knew that it is impossible for them to live what He preached them for 3 years without the help of the Holy Spirit. Through Prophet Ezekiel too, God foretold this truth. "I will sprinkle

clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you....I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statues and be careful to observe my ordinances" (36,25-27). So with a deep thirst for the Holy Spirit the disciples were praying earnestly for this Power from above. And the promise in Acts. 1.8 was fulfilled in them. They became powerful witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and in the ends of the earth. The Scriptural truth is that it is not enough that we receive the Holy Spirit at the Sacrament of Baptism and we become 'the temples of the Holy Spirit' (1Cor.3.16). We have to make the Power of God active in us through our cooperation with the Holy Spirit by our living in fellowship with him, often praying to the indwelling Divine Guest to rekindle His fire within us and ask him to help us always to live by the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, and be led by the Spirit (Gal.5.16, 25).

As we are preparing for the great Feast of Pentecost, let us be convinced that the gift of Anointing of the Holy Spirit is for **all** (Joel.2.28); for all who thirst for him, who believe in Jesus (Jn.7.37-39), who ask for the Spirit (Lk.11.13), who obey God's commandments (Jn.14.15, 16; Acts 5.32), and who repent of their sins and be willing to change their lives (Acts.2.37-39; 3.19,20). In the Early Church those who came to faith were simple people, who fulfilled these requirements in their lives, and the Spirit of the Lord guided their lives and they were leading victorious Christian lives even at the face of persecution (Acts 6.8; 7.54-60 – just one example). Let us not ignore, neglect or bypass the Divine Guest within. It is He who will teach us to pray (Rom8.26), fill us with the Father's love (Rom.5.5), who will bring us to the filial relationship with God the Father (Rom.8.14-16), who will bring us to greater intimacy with Jesus and help us to surrender our lives to Him (1 Cor.12.3), who will make the Word of God come alive in our lives, who will convict us of our sins (Jn.

16.8), who will make our lives fruitful (Gal.5.22,23), who will empower us with His gifts and charisms to make us effective instruments in the kingdom of God (1 Cor.12.4-11), who will help us to accept sufferings with the joy of the Lord (1 Thess.1.6; Phil.4.4). In short, it is only when we are leading a **life in the Spirit**, without grieving him (Eph.4.30) through our sins, without quenching the fire of the Holy Spirit (1Thess.5.19) though our stubbornness and 'stiff-neckedness' (Acts.7.51), the Holy Spirit can fuel our lives with power, ignite our lives with the love, joy and peace of the Lord and help us to be the real catalysts of God's Kingdom spreading the fragrance of Christ to those around (2 Cor.2.15). It is only Holy Spirit who can change our lukewarm, counter-witnessing Christian lives into lives like effective 'living stones building up the kingdom of God' (1 Pet.2.5).

When Prophet Samuel was anointing Saul to be the prince over the people of Israel, he said: "The Spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man" (1Sam.10.6). Let us really desire for a change of life from what we are to what we ought to be, what God intends and expects of us. Yes, in order to fulfill the dream of God about us, He has given us His own Spirit, Spirit of Christ who will help us to live like Christ. Let us not 'resist the Holy Spirit' (Acts 7.51); rather let us cooperate with the Spirit and yield our lives to his working, so that we will become changed persons and will be enabled to live by His word in our pilgrimage here.

Wish all the readers the special Anointing and Empowerment of the forthcoming Feast of Pentecost

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