

Sunday, May 20, 2018

Pentecost Sunday

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Acts 2:1-11

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

Responsorial: Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34

Gospel: John 20:19-23

Pentecost, A Time to Say Yes to the Holy Spirit and Jesus' Call for your Life

Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22)

Imagine being one of the disciples on Easter Sunday. The past few days have been marked, not only by the tragic death of Jesus, but also by your own spectacular failure. After spending so much time with Jesus, watching him perform miracles and hearing him speak about God's mercy, you deserted him in his hour of need. You couldn't even stay awake with him as he prayed at Gethsemane!

But now Jesus has risen and is standing right in front of you. Seeing him again, alive but still wounded, brings back these memories. You cringe inwardly and wait for him to upbraid you for your unbelief—again. But instead, he says the last thing you expect: Peace be with you. (John 20:19)

No condemnation, no anger, not even a mild rebuke. Just pure meek-but-powerful mercy. He still loves you. He still treasures you. All he is concerned about is that you find peace.

Your heart melts. Joy fills your being. You want to express your gratitude and praise, but words fail you. Then, Jesus says something else unexpected: As the Father has sent me, so I send you. (John 20:21)

God had just sent Jesus back to you as a sign of his love and mercy. He has sent Jesus so that you can see what love looks and feels like. And now Jesus is sending you to do the same thing? How can you possibly show such love? How can you possibly be like Christ? Sensing your confusion, Jesus breathes on you: Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22)

Once more, your heart melts. Only this time, the feeling is more personal. The Holy Spirit is pouring God's love and mercy into your heart. That's how he is sending you out: forgiven, filled with his love, and equipped to share that love.

Jesus is sending you too, just as the Father sent him. He is breathing his Spirit into you, just as he did for his disciples. Embrace your mission today on this great feast of Pentecost. Embrace the Holy Spirit.

"Come, Holy Spirit! Make me your ambassador."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

1. The first reading describes the moment when the Holy Spirit “came to rest” on each one of the disciples at Pentecost: “And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.”
 - What do you believe is the significance of the dramatic way the events of the Day of Pentecost are described?
 - Each of us, as baptized and confirmed Catholics, has also received the Holy Spirit. Do you believe that the Lord wants to give you a deeper infilling of his Spirit? If not, why not? If so, how can this happen?
2. Also, in the first reading, the Pentecost witnesses are described as “devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem.” Yet they are all “confused”, “astounded” and “in amazement.”
 - Why do you think this was so? Do you think that would have been your reaction as well?
3. The response to the responsorial psalm is “Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.”
 - How would you describe the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing the face of the earth?
 - What areas in your life would you like the Holy Spirit to renew in a deeper way?
4. In the second reading, we hear these words: “Brothers and sisters: No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.”
 - What spiritual gifts have you received from the Holy Spirit that can benefit your family, your parish, and others?
 - What are some new areas of service that you could undertake to reach out to others or serve more in your parish?
5. The second reading uses the metaphor of a body to describe the body of Christ, “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”
 - What steps can you take, individually or as a group, to bring more unity to your parish?
 - How tolerant are you of other members of the body of Christ who are different than you?
 - In what ways can you also reach out to Christians who are not Catholics?
6. In the Gospel, Jesus’ disciples were full of fear after his resurrection. So his first words to them were words of consolation and reassurance, beginning with “Peace be with you” – the translation of the Hebrew words, “Shalom Aleichem.” In fact he says these words twice. He goes on to say that “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”
 - Following Jesus’ example, and his words of assurance, what practical steps can you take to bring the Lord’s love, comfort, and peace to others?
 - What are the obstacles in you that keep you from doing this? What steps can you take to overcome them through the power of the Holy Spirit, which dwells in you?
7. The meditation is a reflection on the words of the risen Lord, from the Gospel reading, to the disciples in the upper room. It goes on to describe what might have been the disciples’ reaction to these words: “God had just sent Jesus back to you as a sign of his love and mercy. He has sent Jesus so that you can see what love looks and feels like. And now Jesus is sending you to do the same thing? How can you possibly show such love? How can you possibly be like Christ? Sensing your confusion, Jesus breathes on you: *Receive the Holy Spirit*. (John 20:22). Once more, your heart melts. Only this time, the feeling is more personal. The Holy Spirit is pouring God’s love and mercy into your heart. That’s how he is sending you out: forgiven, filled with his love, and equipped to share that love.” It ends with these words: “Jesus is sending you too, just as the Father sent him. He is breathing his Spirit into you, just as he did for his disciples. Embrace your mission today on this great feast of Pentecost. Embrace the Holy Spirit.”
 - Do you believe that just as Jesus was “sent” by the Father, he is also sending you out as a witness to a broken and fallen world?
 - Why do you believe it is first necessary to “Receive the Holy Spirit” before you can do this?
8. Take some time now to pray and ask Jesus to fill you afresh with his Holy Spirit so that you can answer his call to be his ambassador and his witness to others. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Come, Holy Spirit! Make me your ambassador.”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org) and a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org). Maurice was also the founding executive director of the National Fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]