

Pentecost Sunday 2017

The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord

They were all filled with Holy Spirit

Background

Pentecost means 50 days from Easter. The feast itself dates back to the first century. In Italy it was customary to scatter rose-leaves from the ceiling of the churches to recall the miracle of the fiery tongues. In France it was customary to blow trumpets during Divine Service to recall the sound of the mighty wind which accompanied the Descent of the Holy Ghost. In England the gentry amused themselves with horse racing.

Filled with Holy Spirit

We are filled with Holy Spirit - in our suffering. Jesuit Fr. John Kavanaugh wrote: *“The fire of pain is not the fate of the lost, but the refining of the blessed. We all have our chaffe, our waste. We all have our winnowing. It is the fire of Christ that burns the pain away. The burdens we carry do not make us unfit for Christ’s message, they qualify us for it. The only exit from Dante’s Purgatory was through a wall of fire. Once the pain was burned away by love, the other side was Paradise, sheer joy.”*

We are filled with Holy Spirit - in our divisions. *“There is a story of a French Dominican priest who went to preside at a family funeral. And when he walked in, he realized that half of them had been collaborators with the Nazis, and the half on the other side had all been in the resistance. And a terrible silence divided them. So the priest said, ‘OK, I’m not going to begin to celebrate this funeral until you exchange the gift of peace.’ And he waited, and they waited until finally people began to cross the divide to offer each other the gift of peace. Not a peace they could make, but a peace that is given.”*

We are filled with Holy Spirit - in our yearnings. Maryknoll Fr. Edward Moore in the Maryknoll Magazine, December 2009, wrote: *"The majority of people in Guatemala do not have extra cash, but they make an effort to buy some small gift for their children at Christmas. One time, a week before Christmas, I was with a group of children, and I asked them, 'What would you like for Christmas?' They became excited. 'My mommy promised me a dolly,' a little girl said. A boy was hoping for a used bicycle. On and on it went. One little boy, about 7, had not spoken. Finally he said, 'Padre, I want my mommy and daddy to stop fighting and arguing at home.' Silence fell upon us all."*

We are filled with Holy Spirit - in our laughter. Maryknoll Fr. Elmer Wirth in the same Maryknoll Magazine wrote: *"One of the indigent men to whom I regularly give charity here in Hong Kong called to ask me for help. I agreed. I put the money in the only used envelope I had, without looking closely to notice it was one I had at the funeral parlor. The Chinese*

characters on the envelope, referring to the deceased, said ' Have a happy and peaceful death.' I didn't realize my blunder until the phone rang while we were having supper with guests. I recognized the beggar's voice, but he was talking so fast and excitedly that I asked one of the Chinese guests to listen for me. The guest was smiling as he told me the problem: 'He said your peaceful and happy death wish brought him a lot off bad luck, and the only way it can be washed away is for you to give him more money!.'"

You are all filled with Holy Spirit - when you come into this church, when you bow your heads in prayer, when you greet each other in peace, when you come forward for Eucharist, smiling as you leave. And I am filled with Holy Spirit as I stand here watching you.

We are all filled with Holy Spirit – not as our guest but as our very soul?

Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr wrote in his online Daily Meditations last Friday: *“The good, the true, and the beautiful is in everything. Once we realize our strong and loving soul, also known as Indwelling Spirit, we know a peace that nothing else can give us, and that no one can take from us (John 14:27).”*

Let me repeat that: *“Our strong and loving soul, also known as Indwelling Spirit...”* Could this be true, that Holy Spirit within us is our soul? If this is indeed true, Indwelling Holy Spirit doesn't just come *“into”* our souls when we invite her, Spirit *is* our soul, into whom we are invited. Spirit is not participating in our lives, we are participating in Spirit's life, and the shape of our souls depends on how open are to our Spirit invitations. Could this not be true of the universe, that Holy Spirit dwells in our universe, not as her guest, but as her very soul? Our world, the universe would be nothing but sacred, as so beautifully described by Victorian Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ:

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade, bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went,
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastwards, springs –
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with Ah! bright wings.*

Happy Feast of Pentecost!