

Pentecost Sunday

May 19-20, 2018

Sunday Readings: Acts 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7,12-13; John 15:26-27; 16:12-15

To a five year-old waiting at the top of the stairs early on Christmas morning, waiting for my father to finishing shaving seemed like an eternity. There were presents to open! For a couple waiting for the wedding must be exponentially more difficult, as the months turn to weeks and to days, still scrambling to attend to details.

My first computer in the seminary was a Macintosh SE. It had perhaps 1 megabyte of storage space with dual, painfully slow, 3.5-inch floppy disks. Images took close to a minute to load, completely unacceptable by today's standards. It is all a matter of perspective.

The Solemnity of Pentecost celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, a solemn sign that God does not abandon His Church, but rather continues to guide it throughout the ages. **But there was a catch!** Jesus hints that we must be willing to wait, to watch and to listen, that the promised Spirit will come, but not just yet.

The experience of Pentecost was unparalleled in the early Church, and its defining moment in the aftermath of the resurrection. It was such a remarkable experience, as related in Acts of the Apostles, because people from all over the known regions, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, all could hear the Galileans speaking in their own tongues of the mighty acts of God. They were utterly astounded, so quickly it all happened. Jesus had promised to send the Holy Spirit, but when and how? They waited for ten days.

In October of 1962, at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, French Cardinal Eugene Tisserant, Dean of the College of Cardinals, led the assembled bishops in a special prayer for guidance, one that would be repeated many times during those sessions. Its origins are attributed to a 7th century Council in Spain.

We are present, O Lord Holy Spirit, we stand before you, hampered by our sins, but for a special purpose gathered together in your Name. Come to us and be with us and enter our hearts.

Teach us what we are to do and where we ought to tend; show us what we must accomplish, so that, with your help, we may be able to please you in all things.

May you alone be the beginning and catalyst of our judgments, who alone with God the Father and his Son possess a glorious name.¹

We live today without a direct eyewitness account of God's presence in the way the apostles had been privileged to see. The real challenge for the apostles was to trust that they were NOT being abandoned and that in fact the Lord was still very much present.

If we insist on a secular model for our relationship with God, we will be doomed from the get-go. God is not at our beck and call, ready with immediate answers to our prayers and questions. Rather, the Holy Spirit is present to guide us, though we must still make full use of the gifts that God has freely given to us. We have work to do, including waiting in silence for the answer to mature.

The above mentioned prayer continues: "...may we in all things hold fast to justice tempered by mercy, so that in this life our judgment may in no way be at variance with you..."²

¹ IV COUNCIL OF TOLEDO (633), Oratio pro synodo.

Adsumus, Domine Sancte Spiritus, adsumus peccati quidem immanitate detenti, sed in nomine tuo specialiter congregati. Veni ad nos et esto nobiscum et dignare illabi cordibus nostris. Doce nos quid agamus, quo gradiamur et ostende quid efficere debeamus, ut, te auxiliante, tibi in omnibus placere valeamus.

² Ibid., "...sic in cunctis teneamus cum moderamine pietatis iustitiam, ut et hic a te in nullo dissentiat sententia nostra..."

We desire good judgments, and the Holy Spirit is here to assist us. The Holy Spirit's guidance protects, refines, tempers. But it also inflames us to be more passionate, more confident in our decisions, knowing that we were deliberate enough to seek counsel.

Recall that before Jesus said to the disciples, "Receive the Holy Spirit," he twice said "Peace be with you." **Jesus wants us to feel secure**; he knows that we desire security for others and ourselves. He does not want us to be troubled. Jesus was letting the disciples go, slowly but surely. They were now capable of forging out on their own, for with the Holy Spirit present they were never really alone.

Lest we become too frustrated with anything less than an immediate response to our e-mails, our Google searches, college applications, or any other number of life's moments, let us recall that the average American The average Twin Cities commuter spends 41 hours in traffic per year.³ You lose a week of your life each year sitting in traffic. This is life. We might as well make the best of it.

³ Data from INRIX Research Traffic Scorecard 2017

Welcome of Guests

I am delighted that Msgr. Guido Assmann is concelebrating Mass with us this morning, the pastor of the Basilica of St. Quirin in Neuss, Germany, a sister city of St. Paul. They too are located on a river, the west Bank of the Rhine. Members of the Capella Quirina Neuss have joined our Choir.

Introduction to the Feast of Pentecost

Fifty days have now passed since we celebrated the great feast of Triumph and resurrection, the solemnity of Easter. The

ancient Jews first celebrated this feast, commemorating the first fruits of the Spring harvest, fifty days after Passover.

This feast always has been a feast of joy and gratitude for the magnificent power of the Lord manifest in so many ways. Today, as Christians, we recall God's gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Let us pause to acknowledge our failings, confident that Christ who has conquered sin, will free us from ours.