

Pentecost Sunday, Cycle C: 23 May, 2010

Pentecost Sunday has often been referred to as the birthday of the Church. And, on occasions such as birthdays we often begin to romanticize about the good old days and of times past. We recall how it seemed that skies were bluer and the air was cleaner, how people were nicer and more decent and how our heroes and heroines were genuine and authentic. Ah yes, the good old days.

You will find us doing that same thing within the Church. How many of us believe that the pre-Vatican II Church was better than the Church of today? Of course, you would have to have been born before 1965 in order to formulate an answer that question. Some romantics would venture to say that's when Church was really Church, if we could only turn back the clock. Unfortunately, there were some people in the 1950's that longed for the Church of the 1900's and so on. The past often seems better than the present. That's just the way we seem to be wired.

When we hear those dramatic stories from Sacred Scripture, such as that recorded by Luke, as he describes the scene at Pentecost, we visualize it as if it were on a big flat panel, HDTV plasma screen and with the latest in surround sound. Yet, all of that is in our imaginations. But, just think how incredible it must have been to have lived through that historical event in reality. How thrilling and scary it must have been to hear and feel the driving wind, see the tongues of fire on people's heads and hearing people speaking in languages that you had never heard.

Sure, we over dramatize these stories from the romantic past, just as we do with other aspects of our personal histories. You know what I mean, as we imagine those pious, God-fearing and courageous relatives of ours who were always doing the noble thing. We can visualize them going about their daily work--- cheerful, peaceful and thankful for the little that they had. We even have a similarly distorted view of God's actions in the world as we wait for him to reveal himself and his will clearly and unambiguously. It's as if we are waiting for tongues' of fire to appear on our heads and a dramatic change in the affairs of mankind, but that day has yet to occur. And, we are left as lukewarm disciples, wishing for the days when prophets roamed the land telling us of the will of God. Oh, if we just had those good old days.

But, today was the day that the fullness of God's Spirit was poured out on those first believers at Pentecost. And, the temptation is to presume that what happened to them is fundamentally different or better, truer, our even more powerful than what can and does happen to us. They really received the Holy Spirit! If only--- if only---, I'll let you fill in the blank.

If we can take but one thing away from our celebration today, I pray that it would be this: The Spirit that comes to us each and every day, the Spirit that we celebrate and give glory to this day, is the same Spirit that was alive in Jesus 2000 years ago, the same Spirit that infused Adam and Eve with life, the same Spirit that empowered Moses to deliver his people out of bondage out of Egypt and the exact same Spirit who transformed a rag-tag group of people into a body of believers who were filled with courage, conviction, wisdom and understanding. It's precisely that same Spirit that comes to us in the waters Baptism and with the oils of Confirmation.

Those first believers don't have anything that we don't have today! So, it's time to stop making those half-hearted promises of coming to the service of our brothers and sisters and of Christ and his Church. It's time to stop waiting for the good old days because the world will never be the same. It's time to do our part! It's time to ante up! It's time to feel the Holy Spirit within us and it's time to shout-out: "Come, Holy Spirit, come!" Amen.