



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Deacon Terry Ellerman
June 4, 2017 Pentecost Sunday

Reading I Acts 2:1-11

Psalm 104

Reading II 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13

Gospel John 20:19-23

Homily

“Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.” Please repeat. “Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.” As Father Adam said, today is Pentecost. It is celebrated 50 days after Easter, the last day of the Easter Season. That is why I am wearing red instead of white. So next week, when you come in, the Easter candle will no longer be there but will be in a prominent place next to the baptismal font. It will only be lit for baptisms and funerals.

So really, what is Pentecost about? Pentecost is about the Spirit not only coming into the disciples, but also coming into each and every one of us. So if you remember on Good Friday, when Jesus died on the cross, the disciples were devastated and didn't know what to do. They had lost all hope. And what happens on Sunday? Jesus comes in and transforms his body through the walls and says, “Peace be with you. Everything is going to be OK.” And they are filled with hope. Do you remember why the disciples were in the Upper Room with all the doors locked? They wanted to make sure no one got in. Why? Because they thought the Romans would come after them and they would be next.

So we might ask, “What is the purpose of the Spirit?” But before we do that, how many Gods do we believe in? One. How many persons are in that God? Three. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So when the Holy Spirit came to them, did it change and transform them? Absolutely. They took off the locks on the doors and went out to preach the good news. And amazingly, when they preached the good news, guess what happened? Everyone in Jerusalem, and there were a lot of people there because it was festival time, everyone understood exactly what the disciples were saying about God, even though they didn't speak the same language. In fact, the people were wondering, “How can this be? The disciples are speaking in one language, and yet we understand.”

Now if you were a disciple you might be thinking, “My goodness. What power do I have? I can speak and it doesn't make any difference where you are, or who you are, you can understand what I am saying.” So it was really transforming for the disciples.

I bet if you went to China and said, “Good morning, how are you?” They are not going to understand what you said. So that was a gift the disciples received that we didn’t get, but so what? We all have the Spirit and the Spirit does neat things for us. If we make use of the Spirit, the Spirit helps us in every aspect of our lives — good times, bad times and in between.

So you receive the Holy Spirit! So what? How many of you have received the Holy Spirit? When did you receive the Spirit? You received it at baptism. Do you remember when Jesus was baptized at the Jordon River? John the Baptist said, “I baptize with water but there is one to come who is going to baptize with water and the Spirit.” Well, here it is — the Spirit. So each one of us through our baptism have received the Holy Spirit. And anyone here who has been confirmed has received the fullness of that Spirit.

So how does that work? For those of you who were at grade school the other morning, you have already seen this. (Deacon Terry pours a glass of white milk.) All of us are a glass of milk. This morning we are all a glass of milk and when we were baptized, we received the Spirit. And the Spirit is — chocolate. (Deacon Terry pours chocolate into the glass of milk.) At baptism we received a little chocolate, at confirmation we received a lot of chocolate.

(He continues to add more chocolate to the glass.) Now, if I drink this, what am I going to taste? White milk. This isn’t chocolate milk. This is white milk with chocolate in the bottom. For this to be chocolate milk, I have to stir it up. (Deacon Terry stirs the chocolate in with the milk.) If I stir it up, now what do I have? Chocolate milk. But the neat thing about this is, if I don’t drink this and put it in the refrigerator, tomorrow morning when I come to drink it, what am I going to have? I am going to have white milk with chocolate in the bottom.

That is the way it is with the Spirit. We have received the Spirit, but the Spirit isn’t going to do anything for us unless we want the Spirit to do something. We have to mix the Spirit up within us if we want the Spirit to be active in our lives to do something. Now unfortunately, it isn’t as easy as stirring chocolate into white milk. How do we stir up the Spirit within us? We do that through prayer, we do that through talking to God, and we do that through receiving the Sacraments. Every time we come to church, hopefully our Spirit is being energized and stirred up. Because when we come to church don’t we sing and praise God? If that doesn’t stir up the chocolate milk in us, it ought to. Right? When we come and receive the Sacraments, the real body and blood of Jesus — shouldn’t that make us different?

You know I came in this morning and I carried the Book of the Gospels, the most important book. You just heard all the Word proclaimed of God. When I leave, do I leave with the book? No. Why not? Because you have heard the Word and you now should have that within your heart so that you are going to go out and preach it, and not only not only preach it, but live it.

If we are not different people when we leave church than when we came in, then we missed something. If we go out of here and go to HyVee and bump in front of someone in line, we are sending the wrong message. On the other hand, if someone wants to bump in line and you say, “Why don’t you come in?” then we are spreading the good news.

In our second reading today from Paul to the Corinthians, he is saying to each and every one of us that we are part of a body. When we were baptized we became a different person. We became an adopted child of God. We received the Spirit within us. Therefore, God is the head and we are all the body. For what I do affects Rita, it affects Cody, it affects Janet — it affects all of you. What you do affects the rest of us as well. Therefore, how we live our lives is very important. And with that Spirit we have all been given gifts, gifts of the Holy Spirit and each and every one of us has a different one. And to make that gift really fully realized, we all have to be using them.

There is a story out there about this man who died and went to Heaven, and he said to Jesus, “Is your message going to be continued on earth?” Jesus answered, “Yes. With the twelve disciples it was spread. And then, and now, it will be spread by all of you.” We need to be the hands and feet of Christ. We need to be Christ to one another because it isn’t just me, it is us. The Kingdom of God in its wholeness is in Heaven, but if the Kingdom of God isn’t also on this earth where we are and doing things, then we are failing to do something because it is our job to make our family cohesive with God in the center.

So yes, we are all white milk with chocolate in the bottom. And yes, we need to stir the Spirit within us and when we do, we are a different people. We all know it is easy to get into a routine in life. And that is why it is important to come to church each weekend, and it is important that we pray every day, and it is important that we receive the Sacraments because when we do that — it makes us a better people, and it makes us happier.

So if you would, please say with me: “Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.”

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Terry Ellerman is a retired educator and serves as a deacon at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Quincy, Illinois.

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