



Reflection - Pentecost

This Sunday most of the action is in the Acts of the Apostles. So with due reverence to John's gospel, let's break precedent and focus on this week's First Reading from Acts. But first, let's borrow a thought from John's gospel account of the risen Christ appearing in the upper-room. After greeting the apostles with the customary "Shalom," Jesus charges them: *'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'* *When he had said this, he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit...'*

With these words Christ sets the table for Pentecost, literally fifty days after Passover, a day the Jewish people reserved to celebrate God's favor. Jesus alerts the apostles that The Holy Spirit is coming, but he will not arrive until Jesus has returned to the Father. It is more than a theological nicety that Jesus and the Holy Spirit do not occupy the same space or the same role at the same time. There is a sublime order to the Trinity... Creator, Redeemer and Advocate. Jesus has told us before that now that his work is done, he must go to the Father, but promises that he will never abandon us, for the Holy Spirit is coming. Significantly, Jesus does not just speak to the Apostles; he breathes on them from the depths of his risen body. As the Father has sent him to do God's work in the world, Jesus sends us to carry on God's work through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

True to his word, fifty days later the apostles received the Holy Spirit. Once again they had gathered together. Once again God entered the room and moved among them. But this time there was no physical presence. There were no wounds to inspect; no familiar face to welcome. The flesh was replaced by a force. The power of the Holy Spirit was upon them... manifest in a violent wind and tongues of fire. But more significant than the pyrotechnics was the infusion of evangelical brilliance and energy. God the Advocate filled them and sent them out to preach and to teach with infinite wisdom, zeal and courage. The apostles... those ordinary guys... those cowards... those betrayers... those numb skulls... had become inspired evangelists, fearless missionaries, carriers of the new covenant, living

witnesses to our redemption. In gospels from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost, we have observed the spiritual growth of the apostles. Miraculously they have learned so much and come so far. But how much have we learned? How far have we come?

In this Lenten-Easter cycle we learned once again that we are saved. Every sin that ever was or ever will be was nailed to that cross. In the risen Christ we know that eternal life is ours. We know that it is God's gift outright. We need only believe and, as a sign of our belief, that we be baptized into the family of believers. We know too that believing is not a spectator sport. We can't plump down on life's proverbial couch and wait for Dominos to deliver eternal life. Our faith must be active, not passive. Only in an active faith can we generate the hope and the love that are the legacy of our redemption.

Sadly, like the apostles, we are slow learners and fast forgetters. That's why the Holy Spirit comes to us as it did to them, not as a visitor, but as the abiding presence of God. You can ignore him, but not if you value salvation. He's with us now. He's why you are reading God's word, today. He answers every prayer. If we take nothing else from these past ninety days... be awake, be alert to God's presence in your life. Receive the Holy Spirit.

God love you!