

## **FR. JOHN'S HOMILY**

### **Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021**

We spent the last few weeks of this Easter season in John's Gospel Chapter 15. Jesus says, "I am the vine you are the branches." It reminds us that we have been grafted onto God and in His paschal mystery. Like my Papa's pecan trees, we can now grow and be fruitful as long as we remain united and abide with God. The other word I would have called our attention to if we carried on in John's Gospel is "consecrate." A word that means set apart; we are all set apart for God and to serve Him and His kingdom. It begins at our Baptism.

Since we have had many of our children receive their first communion this month, we have been focusing on Jesus as the Bread of Life. Receiving Jesus, we unite, remain, and abide always with God. We consecrate our lives to God in this mystery.

To help us be His fruitful disciples, God gives Himself to us in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, whom we honor this weekend of Pentecost. We receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude-Courage, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord, which is wonder and awe in God. Living in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control.

What tends to happen in our lives, I know it was true for me, is that as I received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they just remain dormant within me until they were stirred up within me. We all need the stirring up of the Holy Spirit within us.

My teacher in the Holy Spirit was Msgr. Jim Mancini. He taught me about these gifts, how to trust in God and allow the Holy Spirit to live within using two examples. The first example being a glass of chocolate milk. Once you pour chocolate into a glass of milk it goes to the bottom and just sits there. You have to stir it up so that the glass of milk changes. It is the same with us, we have to stir up the gifts of the Holy Spirit within us. Otherwise the gifts just remain dormant. We need to stir up the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Our desire for God and His gifts is one way these gifts can be stirred up within us.

The other example Msgr. Mancini used was that of the two gloves. One glove was empty, the other had sand in it. The empty one was just an extension of the hand and could be used for whatever purpose it was needed. The other glove with sand could be used but it was more difficult to use. The same with us and God. If we are empty and open, we can be an extension of God and in service. If not, God can use us, but we make it more difficult for Him. Saying this, you have to ask the question which one am I?

Today we celebrate Pentecost - the Greek name for "fifty days" or seven weeks, hence the name of the feast has been called the "Feast of Weeks." It was a communal celebration of God's abundant fidelity to the Jews in the giving of the land and its fertility. They were gathered to give thanks and have a share in the crops.

That is why we hear of so many of the Jews gathering in one place in Jerusalem. The Feast of Weeks or the celebration of the first cuttings of the grain harvest. It was the second of the three major feasts in the religious tradition of Israel. The first was the Feast

of Unleavened Bread, or Passover. The third was the Feast of Tents or Booths, celebrating the harvestings of grapes and olives.

So in God's timing, and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we have this second feast gathering of many people, with many nations and many tongues. This outpouring of God was His interior fire He would share, so we could go out and bring His loving presence to the world.

In Acts of the Apostles, we hear of the apostles receiving the interior fire, with the strong wind and the tongues of flames. The wind represents God's Spirit that would empower them and send them out. The tongues of flames representing God's transforming power that changes us from inside out, in which we are called to share with others that they too can experience God's transforming power of love. It is shown in the manner of how they speak and how they will live their lives.

This is Evangelization: receiving the gifts of God and then learning to share what God gives us with others. For the Jewish believers, Pentecost was a harvest celebration. For the Christian community, it is the celebration of God's giving us the gifts of the Holy Spirit, His interior fire, to send us out to bear fruit.

The Gospel of John presents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit this way: On the first day of the week, the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus stood in the midst and said, "Peace be with you." When He said this, He showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (Remember the wind and the flame,) then he breathed on them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, whose sins you retain are retained."

The Father and the Son share their love with us through the Holy Spirit. This interior fire is now within us to go out and proclaim the Good News. There can be no fruitfulness in proclaiming Good News without the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit says to each of us, "Receive the Gifts given to you from the Father and the Son. Do not fear!" Msgr. Jim Mancini was one who taught us about the Holy Spirit and was one who lived it out by his life. He would go wherever the Holy Spirit led him, in dark, evil, and sometimes violent places, and he would always say, "Show up and God will do the work." God already has done His work, and all we have to do is show up and allow God to do His work within us. Stir up the flame of God's interior love within us, and let us learn to be humble and open to allow God's spirit to work within us.

Come Holy Spirit, Come and fill the heart of your faithful.