

**For The Bulletin of
May 20, 2018**



**THE FEAST OF PENTECOST
THE GREAT 50TH DAY
THE CONCLUSION OF THE
EASTER SEASON**

From Father Robert

When we as Christians think of Pentecost, we often have the image of the disciples in the Upper Room, with the tongues of fire descending upon each disciple before they preach to Jerusalem. But that is Luke's story in the Acts of the Apostles and he definitely has a flair for story-telling! In his telling of the Spirit's descent, he places the event on the Feast of Pentecost, a Jewish feast celebrated fifty days after Passover. Moreover, Luke has made the ascension forty days after Passover, which makes a nice bridge to this Feast of Pentecost only ten days later. He tends to objectify the supernatural, for example, he portrays the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as tongues of fire descending on each disciple. And because he is such a good story-teller, it is his stories we remember.

However, today we have John's version of the handing on of the Spirit. Interestingly, this event happens not on Pentecost, as Luke would have it, but on Easter Sunday evening! This is the same

evening on which the risen Jesus appeared to the assembled disciples without Thomas. So we get our liturgical timetable from Luke, but our theology today comes from the Gospel of John.

The risen Jesus appears in the midst of the disciples, despite the locked doors. This means not that Jesus walks through walls, as so many preachers would have it, but that he appears from His heavenly glory. For if he walked through a wall, where was He immediately prior to that? No, after the resurrection, Jesus is with His Heavenly Father, and comes from there at will. Jesus comes to be with the disciples and give them the gift of peace, and also the gift of the Holy Spirit by breathing upon them. This earthy, rather sacramental way of gifting the disciples with the Holy Spirit is much different than Luke would have it. For him, the Holy Spirit is a gift of God. In John's gospel, the Holy Spirit is a gift of the Father, but given directly by Jesus.

Not only do the disciples receive the Holy Spirit but also the ability to forgive sins. By His death and resurrection Jesus has conquered the cosmic power of sin, with a capital *S*. Now it is the disciples' role, and our own, to continue this mission by forgiving individual sins, almost as a "mop-up" operation after the major victory has been won. The same Spirit has been given to us, and it is our mission to forgive individual sins each time someone sins against us. Forgiveness is not limited to sacramental confessions. As Christians, we are to forgive. It is a hallmark of our identity, given to us by Jesus Himself.



Living The Paschal Mystery

It can be a true challenge to forgive on a daily basis. There are so many opportunities for slights, annoyances, oversights, and sometimes even deliberate harm. Something in our human nature wants to learn and remember when these things happen to us. And while we will probably never forget such experiences, we are to forgive. In so doing we continue the victory Jesus won on Easter. By our forgiving others, we advance the glorious reign of peace. This is our task, and we have the Holy Spirit to help us. Forgiving means letting go, so that the matter does not consume us from within. Forgiving does not mean the matter was OK. When we forgive we do so as much for our benefit as for the one we are forgiving. By forgiving we are simultaneously conforming ourselves more perfectly to Jesus, and dying to ourselves and our earthly cares and desires.

As the Easter Season comes to its conclusion today, what questions does this feast raise concerning your understanding of the Holy Spirit and Pentecost?

- The Spirit of God reveals itself in today's readings in the forms of fire and wind and breath. What other images can help us understand the Spirit of God working within and around us?

- How does the presence of God's Spirit make our parish "different" from other groups and organizations?
 - When have you sensed the Holy Spirit prompting you to a specific act or moved you to act beyond your fears or doubts or out of your "comfort zone?"
 - What is the Spirit calling our community to take on or embrace this Pentecost?
 - What "truth" have you been struggling with? Is Father Griener's, SJ homily still resonating within your heart and mind from last weekend???
- What do you "hear" the Holy Spirit saying to you?



About Liturgy: Speaking In Our Own Tongues

The solemnity of Pentecost is a wonderful expression of the diversity of the gifts the Holy Spirit gives us. One of these gifts is diversity itself, expressed in the many languages of the world in which God's might acts are proclaimed. Diversity, like any gift, needs to be appreciated by nurturing the relationships it brings. We cannot simply celebrate a "multicultural" Eucharist one day without having carefully built up the relationships needed to draw forth the variety of gifts from the cultures that make us a parish. Our Social Events, such as our

upcoming “Luau” are a perfect opportunity for encouraging and building up these cross-cultural relationships. Once caring and trusting relationships have been established, then together we discern how best to express the gifts that each culture brings to the liturgy and to the life of our parish. Most of all, please remember that diversity is not expressed by spoken language alone. Visual arts, music (sung and instrumental), and especially gracious hospitality can do more to express our unity in diversity than a multitude of languages.



About Celebrating Today As The Church’s “Birthday”

Some have come to celebrate today’s feast as the church’s “birthday.” In some ways, Luke’s account of Pentecost feels a little like a birth in which the Holy Spirit inaugurates the church’s public witness to the world. Yet to use the cultural symbols of our chronological anniversaries of birth, such as birthday cakes and “Happy Birthday” songs, to express the paschal mystery of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus misses the point. If there is any birthday metaphor to this

day, it is found in the Risen Christ breathing the Holy Spirit’s life into the disciples in that Upper Room, in the same way the Creator breathed the Holy Spirit into the nostrils of the first human, in the same way the Holy Spirit breathed over the waters in the beginning, in the same way Jesus on the cross breathed His last and handed over His spirit.

We might understand this birth of the church better in light of what we understand about the sacraments of initiation. Because the Holy Spirit is present from the beginning, the Spirit is given first to us at baptism, and that gift is sealed by the anointing of confirmation, and strengthened for mission by the Eucharist. As we read in the General Introduction of Christian Initiation: “Thus the three sacraments of Christian Initiation closely combine to bring us, the faithful of Christ, to our full stature to enable us to carry out the mission of the entire people of God in the church and in the world” (2).





The Floral Arrangement at the Altar today is placed To The Glory of God and In Honor of The Fortieth Anniversary of Marriage of **Virgil and Nancy Santos**. Congratulations on your wedding anniversary and may God continue to grant you the deepening of your love, the best of health, and many more happy years to come!

From Father Tom Bonacci, CP
May 14, 2018

Dear Friends,

The Board of Directors, Executive Director, and all at The Interfaith Peace Project are proud to stand in solidarity with the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. This is not a partisan campaign. It is about right and wrong. It is about alleviating the suffering and indignities of people of all ages, races, orientation, religions and philosophies.

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, is beginning a 40-day campaign on May 14, 2018. On six consecutive Mondays, people of peace are standing up for 12 Fundamental Principles at state capitals throughout the United States, including the country's capital in Washington, D.C. We are highlighting two principles on each of the six Mondays from May 14 through June 18, 2018, along with

questions we developed. We invite you to be in dialogue with yourself and others about these principles.

Principle 1:

We are rooted in a moral analysis based on our deepest religious and constitutional values that demand justice for all. Moral revival is necessary to save the heart and soul of our democracy.

Principle 2: We are committed to lifting and deepening the leadership of those most affected by systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation and to building unity across lines of division.

Questions to Consider Personally and/or With Family, Friends and Faith Communities about Principles 1 and 2:

- Am I broken-hearted for the injustices that I see in my neighborhood? What causes me to look away?
- Do I believe that Poor People are more deeply impacted by systemic racism, poverty, the war economy, and ecological devastation? What evidence supports my belief either way?
- What would it mean to recognize Poor People's leadership and wisdom, instead of assuming I know what is best for them and inserting myself as their leader? What does it feel like to have my authority taken away?
- How can I build unity across lines of division?

If you wish to learn more or become involved in the Poor People's Campaign, go to:

<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/>
or search for Poor Peoples Campaign in

your state. Let us know where and how you will participate and send us photos and reflections.

Peacefully,

Rev. Andrea Goodman
President of the Board
with the Executive Director,
The Board of Directors,
The Advisory Board and all of us
at The Interfaith Peace Project

Pope Francis warns of two paths to holiness

May 10, 2018

by Thomas Reese, Religion News Service

As a spiritual guide to those seeking to be better Christians, Pope Francis recognizes that many are tempted to follow the wrong paths to holiness. These are not bad people following the path of sin, but good people getting lost in the woods without a map. Francis believes that it is especially important to warn Christians of two false paths to holiness.

In Chapter 2 of *Gaudete et Exsultate*, an apostolic exhortation released in March, Francis explains that these are not new temptations. Christians through the centuries have been so tempted, and spiritual writers have labeled these false paths Gnosticism and Pelagianism. These are old temptations repackaged for a new age.

In Gnosticism, perfection is measured by information and knowledge or by some special experience, not by one's charity. The Gnostic takes pride in understanding everything, in having special knowledge.

"Gnostics think that their explanations can make the entirety of the faith and the Gospel perfectly comprehensible," explains Francis. "They absolutize their own theories and force others to submit to their way of thinking." They "reduce Jesus' teaching to a cold and harsh logic that seeks to dominate everything."

Francis considers Gnosticism one of the most sinister ideologies because, "while unduly exalting knowledge or a specific experience, it considers its own vision of reality to be perfect." Gnostics "domesticate mystery" and think they know everything.

"When somebody has an answer for every question, it is a sign that they are not on the right road," according to Francis. "God infinitely transcends us; he is full of surprises," explains Francis. "Someone who wants everything to be clear and sure presumes to control God's transcendence."

The Gnostics' conviction that they alone have the truth leads them to claim that their way of understanding the truth authorizes them to exercise a strict supervision over others' lives.

Francis, on the other hand, believes that "in the church there legitimately coexist different ways of interpreting many aspects of doctrine and Christian life." Our understanding and expression of doctrine "is not a closed system, devoid of the dynamic capacity to pose questions, doubts, inquiries."

He cites Pope John Paul II, who warned of the temptation on the part of those in the church who are more highly educated "to feel somehow superior to other members of the faithful." Gnostics can think that because they know

something, or are able to explain it in certain terms, that they are already saints, perfect and better than the "ignorant masses."

While Gnostics take pride in their knowledge, Pelagians take pride in their personal efforts. Gnostics stress the intellect, while Pelagians stress the will.

Pelagians "ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style," reports Francis.

While Pelagians speak of grace, it is often just an add-on to the all-powerful human will.

"When some of them tell the weak that all things can be accomplished with God's grace," writes Francis, "deep down they tend to give the idea that all things are possible by the human will, as if it were something pure, perfect, all-powerful, to which grace is then added."

Rather, "in this life human weaknesses are not healed completely and once for all by grace," Francis explains. "Grace, precisely because it builds on nature, does not make us superhuman all at once."

Not acknowledging our limitations "prevents grace from working more effectively within us," he writes. "Unless we can acknowledge our concrete and limited situation, we will not be able to see the real and possible steps that the Lord demands of us at every moment, once we are attracted and empowered by his gift."

Francis reminds us that "The Church has repeatedly taught that we are justified not by our own works or efforts, but by the grace of the Lord, who always takes the initiative." We cannot buy God's friendship with our works, "it can only be a gift born of his loving initiative."

This truth should affect the way we live. It invites us "to live in joyful gratitude for this completely unmerited gift" of his friendship. We can only celebrate this free gift if we realize that our earthly life and natural abilities are his gifts.

Yet some Christians today seek justification through their own efforts. "The result is a self-centered and elitist complacency, bereft of true love," writes Francis. "This finds expression in a variety of apparently unconnected ways of thinking and acting: an obsession with the law, an absorption with social and political advantages, a punctilious concern for the Church's liturgy, doctrine and prestige, a vanity about the ability to manage practical matters, and an excessive concern with programs of self-help and personal fulfilment."

Rather than spending their time and energy on these things, Christians should let themselves be led by the Spirit in the way of love. If the church does not follow the promptings of the Spirit, it "can become a museum piece or the possession of a select few," says Francis. "This can occur when some groups of Christians give excessive importance to certain rules, customs or ways of acting. The Gospel then tends to be reduced and constricted, deprived of its simplicity, allure and savor."

This form of Pelagianism explains why groups, movements and communities so often "begin with an intense life in the

Spirit, only to end up fossilized or corrupt," writes Francis. "Once we believe that everything depends on human effort as channeled by ecclesial rules and structures, we unconsciously complicate the Gospel and become enslaved to a blueprint that leaves few openings for the working of grace."



The way to avoid these wrong paths, says Francis, is by reminding ourselves of the primacy of the theological virtues, the center of which is charity. What truly counts, according to St. Paul, is "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). Or as Paul says elsewhere, "The one who loves another has fulfilled the law ... for love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:8, 10).

Francis reminds us how Jesus showed us the face of God "in every one of our brothers and sisters, especially the least, the most vulnerable, the defenseless and those in need." Loving our Lord and our neighbor is what Christianity is all about, a point missed by Gnostics and Pelagians alike.

Francis ends Chapter 2 with a prayer: "May the Lord set the Church free from these new forms of Gnosticism and Pelagianism that weigh her down and block her progress along the path to holiness!" He asks each of us to reflect and discern how these aberrations may be present in our lives.

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a columnist for Religion News Service and author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*.]

Thank You

...to our volunteer parishioners who do so much to help us each day: those who clean the church and parish hall very early each Saturday morning: **Al Cosce, Carole Miller, Mency Osborne, Angela Bueno, and Steve Rojek.**

...to those who clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall: **Robert Goncalves, Virginia Noack, Mary Ewing, Patricia Britton, and Harlan Young.**

...to the members of our Art & Environment Committee for creating the beautiful environment for Pentecost and the next three weeks: **Rich Confetti, Don Benson, Jose Palomino, Theresa Nelms, Nancy DiMaggio, Pat Kramer, Tom and Stevie Catchings, Tony and Claudia Gumina, Dorothy O'Connor, Pablo and Norma Villegas, Lorraine Lohmeier, Vangie Parrilla, Harlan Young, Judy Heckendorn and Janice Kegler.**

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...to **our counting teams** who are here every week to count the weekly collections.

...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week:

Jeannine Ford, Melodye Costanza, Harlan Young, Alicia Perez, Sharon Cissell, Yvette Young, Joe Fanfa and Bev Iacona.

...to our St. Vincent de Paul and Mobile Mall volunteers who transported last week's donations: **Frank Zamora and Barbara Jackson.**

...to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: **Carole Miller, Dave Costanza, Beth Enea, Richard Enea, Kathy Augusta and Vince Augusta.**

...to our wonderful Parking Lot Security who keep watch over our vehicles during the weekend liturgies: **Don Benson, Steve Rojek and Tony Gumina.**

Winter Nights – a week of love with a capital ‘L.’

For many years, our parish has actively supported the Winter Nights Rotating Family Shelter (WN) by hosting or co-hosting with partner congregations. WN is a project of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County that provides a clean, warm and safe shelter for homeless families with children. Central and East Contra Costa faith communities open their doors to house the clients.

After a two week stay, the shelter “rotates” to another church. The shelter opens each year in mid-October and, this year, will close at the end of May.

During the week of May 7 – 11, St. Ignatius of Antioch parishioners provided wonderful dinners, lunch and

breakfast supplies as well as other supplies necessary to keep the shelter running. Monday evening's menu included barbequed chicken breasts, vegetables and rice ala Fara, mixed green salad with apple pie and other treats for dessert. Tuesday featured a Hawaiian themed luau with teriyaki (shoyu) chicken, kalua (pulled) pork, steamed white rice, macaroni salad and pineapple upside-down cake. Delicious lasagna, mixed green salad and ice cream for dessert made up the fare on Wednesday. Thursday was Asian night with lumpia, pansit, potstickers and apple pie. Friday's menu included honey barbequed chicken wings, barbequed pork on a stick, macaroni and cheese, mixed vegetables, rice and cookies. Thanks to **Jose Palomino, Dave Costanza, Maryann Peddicord, Pat Kramer, Vicki & Brian McCoy, Sue & Rick Howell, Samantha Peralto, Cheryna Wright, Viviana Wright, Dave Simpson, Clem Bushman, Walter Schlueter, Bob Plurkowski, Peter Degl'Innocenti, Estrella Rusk, Bobbie Ocang, Vangie Parrilla, Crispina Malonosan, Alex Como, Steve Rojek, Blake Rojek and Jessie Okon.**

In addition to the meals, our parishioners also provided laundry service in October, December, February and April for the towels and washcloths used by the shelter clients when visiting the Oasis site at St. Vincent de Paul in Pittsburg. Thank you to **Liz Carnero, Ronda Demay, Sue & Rick Howell, Lorraine Lohmeier, and Vicki & Brian McCoy.**