

June 8, 2014  
Pentecost Sunday – Cycle A  
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning! Happy Pentecost! Last night I was in here, in the church, of course and I was just meditating on our beautiful painting of the Pentecost. And again, it's modern on purpose and old at the same time. I was thinking, of course, Mary is in the center and the Apostles are there and the Holy Spirit comes upon them. I was thinking about what does that really mean for us? What it means, of course, is just as with them, so with us. That same Holy Spirit with all His power and all His fire came and set them on fire and then the people watched them burn. That's gotta be happening with us. And what happens when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, what we need to focus on is He brings and He desires unity. He desires that we be one. That's a humungous desire because it's one of the things that what we do, especially as Americans we always look about what divides us. We always come, even when we come to church and say "Well, what am I gonna get out of this? When God comes, what is God gonna give to me?" What that does, is that divides us but the Spirit comes and brings us one.

Remember, all the way back, if you were at mass last night for the Vigil – they have different Mass readings for different masses, of course, and the Vigil, the First Reading deals with the reality of the Tower of Babel. When they were building the Tower of Babel, what did they say? They said, "Let us build or make a name for ourselves." So, God came and split them up because at that time when they were trying for vanity and it was all about me, God said, "OK, this isn't gonna be good, we're gonna separate you." But, when the Holy Spirit comes, what He does is He gives them the power. Again, this is one of the most important things. When the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles, they didn't just sit there and say "whoa – I got the Holy Spirit. I've got power. I've got peace. Whoa – this is the greatest thing." Immediately, they went out to others to bring others to Christ. One of the surest signs of the Holy Spirit in someone's life is they become other centered. They become so more concerned about other people knowing Christ instead of what they are going to get out of it.

You know, when a person comes and says, "You know, I've got the gifts of the Spirit, or I hear people say all the time, "Father, God told me" and I love that one – especially if we are focusing on the same thing. "Well, God told me, Father, this". "Well, you know He told me another thing and I spent an hour with Him this morning so God's lying to one of us." Is that true? No – it means one of us isn't listening the way we need to be. Because the mind of God is one so when we all get to the mind of God. We are all going to have the same thoughts about things. We are going to focus because we are going to get God's mind and not our mind. When we start focusing about the way I like things, what am I going to get out of things, how is this going to affect me? How is this going to affect my family? How am I going to get things out of this? Whenever I start focusing on me, it takes away the Holy Spirit. When I think this is important, it takes away from the Holy Spirit because the Spirit always brings unity. There is only one body of Christ – correct?

So, if my hand decides to do things separate from the rest of my body, is there a problem? Yes. We have to be in union. My whole body has to be in union. My brain has to be in union to control every

part of my body so we have one goal in mind. The best way to do this, ladies and gentlemen, is we gotta keep our eyes on Jesus because when we look at Jesus, we are one. When we look at ourselves, we are divided. So, how often do we come and look at ourselves? How often do we come to mass on Sunday and how often do we come just to focus on Jesus? So, when we focus on Jesus and we forget about ourselves, now the Spirit can do some work inside of us. What happens when that Spirit takes control? He makes us bear witness to others and He makes us evangelizers. He makes us people who are so desiring of bringing others to Him.

One of the greatest ways I believe a person can find out whether they are living according to the Spirit or according to the flesh is: Are they living more for others and bringing others to Christ or are they more concerned about themselves and their spiritual gifts and whatever they are going to get out of God. One is focused on self. The other is a life controlled by the Spirit. The Spirit isn't concerned about self. The Spirit is always concerned about others and about how we become one. So, like when I tweeted this morning, I said, "The Spirit makes us one. What are we doing? The Spirit wants to make us one. Do we want everybody to be one?" And again, we aren't just talking about us and non-Catholics. It's hard enough for us to be one as a parish. Right? You know, it just is. We all have our own ideas. We all have our own things. We all come and say, "I really think this is what God wants." Well, we gotta be one. We focus on Jesus and we have to make sure we are focused on Christ and doing His will. The first thing we have to do is make sure we are focused on Christ.

The second thing we have to do is make sure we are surrendered to the daily Spirit so that I do always become more others concerned. I'm thinking, I'm looking at the bigger picture. I'm looking about everybody coming to Jesus, not just myself and what's gonna help me. Now, that's hard – especially for a person like me who like, last week, I was in Memphis and I was talking to all these men – great guys – but at the end I was fielding questions about the 22:32 men and the great stuff coming out of there but I sat there and I said, "Like for instance, what do you think my greatest sin is?" They all said at the same time, "Pride." I said, "Shut up! That ain't my greatest sin. My greatest sin is my tongue." And they said, "Oh know, Father, we think it's pride." Really!? And so, the problem with pride is what? It's concerned about self. It's having your own way. So when these men, these 30 men from outside said that, I said, "you miserable so and so's." But, usually there is always some truth in there and I said, "Yes, pride is always one of the things I deal with but it's not my main one." Maybe it is. Pride is the core of all of our sins. But it's going my way and making sure things go my way. I have to surrender to the Holy Spirit. I gotta say, "OK, Spirit, you know how prideful I can be. So, take control."

And you see, that's what happens when we listen to the third part of the Gospel today that when Jesus came and He brought them peace and He gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit, what was part of the gift of the Holy Spirit that He gave to the Apostles? To bring reconciliation. To unify people. So, what we have to make sure in our own lives is that when I am prideful, when I'm not working in the Holy Spirit, then what happens is you and I sin. We talk about each other. We gossip. We do all of those things. All of us do it. We all do it. Just don't even try to make excuses for it. We can't. So what God does is He sends the Holy Spirit so that when we have done things out of selfishness and sin, He can reconcile us – reconcile us with God and reconcile us with each other because that's the will of God.

Remember, He's been praying that if you go to daily mass, these last couple weeks we have been into the prayer of Jesus. In His priestly prayer, the number one thing He prays for is, what? That we be one – right – that we be one. So, if we are not one, that's when we have to repent and say, "Lord, so often I'm thinking I know your will better than anyone else. So often, I'm thinking that my way is the only way." And it can be a righteous thing too. "So often, instead of bringing unity, I bring division by gossip, by talking about people, through my own pride. Jesus, come and heal me. Bring me reconciliation. Reconcile me to you and my brothers and sisters that we may truly be one."

So, this day of Pentecost isn't about us. This day of Pentecost, God gives us the greatest gift He has: Himself to live within us so we can go forth. And not see that which divides us but see that which unifies us. What unifies us is Almighty God. And repent for all the times when we are not working as a union but we're working on our own little individual things. The Spirit wants to make us one. When we do that, the greatest gifts, you know, we get the 12 gifts of the Holy Spirit and then the fruits of the Holy Spirit but Jesus talks explicitly, He gives them that fruit today. What does He give them? Peace. And isn't that what we all want – peace. I know I do – oh my goodness gracious! Just to always be at peace – knowing that I am in the will of God and I'm seeking His will above all things.

So, when you and I are working on unity, when we are working on being one, when we are surrendering ourselves to the Holy Spirit, keeping our eyes focused on Jesus, He promises us peace. When we mess up, He promises us reconciliation to again, bring us peace. So today, on this feast of Pentecost, let's keep our eyes on Jesus. Let us surrender to the Holy Spirit and when we mess up, let's seek Him to bring us reconciliation. You got it? You get it? You gonna do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.