

Today's feast brings us to the joyful conclusion of the Easter season. The gift of the Spirit is the final act of the paschal mystery. We know the story of the first reading so well that we often forget about St. John's account. The two accounts are not contradictory, but rather signify the same event - What Jesus had promised, he gives. The one who was dead, and now risen, gives them His breath. This is not insignificant, especially in the life of a first century Jew. This action has allusions back to Genesis.

The first chapter in Genesis, second verse, depicts the life force of the Creator as ***ruah***, meaning "breath" or "wind," which swept over the face of the primordial waters. And in the second chapter, the first human creature, Adam, becomes a living being only when the Creator breathes the breath of life into its nostrils (Gn 2:7). At Pentecost, it is this same divine life-force, that ***ruah***, that *re-creates* a frightened group of disciples into bold proclaimers of the Gospel.

He unleashes in them the power of the Spirit. He directs them to open themselves to the gifts of the Spirit.

The symbols of divine presence described in Acts 2 are also familiar from the Old Testament: thundering noise, as God's manifestation at Sinai; a whirlwind, like that from which God spoke to Job (Jb 38:1); and flames of fire, such as Moses saw at Mount Horeb in the burning bush. (Ex 3:2).

The common take away is this: As in previous times of critical need, God's presence is visible and audible, profoundly transforming those who experience it.

Fire, wind, sound, all combine to make known to the people that God is at work.

But, perhaps it is breath that best signals this intimacy. God, in the person of Jesus and the power of the Spirit, is as close to each and every believer

as is our very breath, taken deeply into our lungs thousands of times every day, it is a constant vivifying force.

And the Church needs anew this life-giving force of the Spirit, to be **strong** in its fight against **sin** in the world.

We need the Spirit's **wisdom** when our church leaders challenge the erosion of our religious liberties.

We need the Spirit's **vision** and **understanding** to take us through the shadows of turmoil and conflict.

We need the Spirit's **fortitude** so that we do not prostitute our values, that we **defend** the sacredness of marriage, uphold the **dignity** of the poor, **and honor the right to life** of the unborn and the terminally ill.

We need the Spirit's **courage** to keep the faith of Jesus Christ alive in us so that we can hand it on to our children and their children.

We need the **reverence** from the Holy Spirit to rightly place ourselves before the holy and almighty God.

We breathe in deeply the Holy Spirit.

Just as breath must be exhaled and cannot be kept within, so too, does the Spirit's power direct us outward to mission.

Today is a reminder that there is nothing that cannot be transformed or made new by the Holy Spirit!

Our marriages can be **transformed** by the Holy Spirit... and so can our singleness, our youth can be on fire for the Lord and our elders can be reinvigorated in their faith.

This holy breath is behind our words in every language of the world, to speak of God's kingdom with compassion, justice, peace and above all... truth... for Christ Himself called the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth.

Because Jesus lives and breathes... breathes out the Holy Spirit upon us, we can confidently pray: Come Holy Spirit and Renew the Face of the Earth!.