

PENTECOST SUNDAY ~ 2013 [C]

Acts 2: 1 - 11

Romans 8: 8 - 17

John 14: 15 - 16, 23 - 26

I must confess that I've never had any interest in sport, but if I had the time, patience - and money - I might be tempted to have a go at golf.

You know, in a way, Pentecost is like golf: because, with golf, if you don't understand the lie of the green, the direction of the wind and, if you don't get your swing right, you end up in the rough.

I guess for lots of Christians Pentecost happened centuries ago to a small group of special people - it doesn't really apply to me - that's when you find yourself in the rough! In fact, the Holy Spirit coming powerfully to quietly indwell each Christian soul, is the Lord's special gift to each and every one of us.

Because the gift of the Holy Spirit, given to the Disciples, and Mary in the Upper Room in Jerusalem 2000 or so years ago, is the same Spirit who indwells us by our Baptism and Confirmation.

But let's recall we find in John's Gospel that, 50 days earlier: "The disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid." Jn. 20: 19

Then, Jesus stands among them, and: "They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord. Then he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Jn. 20: 20 & 22

Jesus gently breathes on them in the Upper Room, and envelops them in His Spirit.

If we truly come to know the presence of the Lord in my life as a living reality, then, to use another golfing term; we're out of the rough, and we've scored an 'Eagle!'

Because the Lord assures us that: "Those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.

They will soar high on wings like eagles." Is. 40: 31

John shows us that the Spirit can come upon us like a gentle breath.

Luke, in the reading from Acts, says that the Holy Spirit comes upon the Disciples: "Like the roaring of a mighty windstorm. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit" Acts 2: 2 - 4

Is John's indwelling of the Spirit, or Luke's, the more important; the more genuine than the other?

No: Jesus indwells us by His Spirit in different ways to meet our different needs at different moments in our life.

Just as Jesus explains to Nicodemus when He tells him he must be born again: "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Jn. 3: 8

And I think that phrase, 'born of the Spirit,' is the key to unlock our understanding of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit gives us the grace - the very life of the Lord - to fulfil that commandment, really, John gives to Nicodemus that: "You must be born again." Jn. 3: 7

Because, Jesus explains to Him: "No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life." Jn. 3: 5 - 6

And, not only that; it means we can unlock the doors of fear we all hide behind lest we're recognised as followers of Jesus, and are thought of as somehow not quite right in the head!

Jesus, in appearing to the Disciples in John's telling of the coming of the Spirit, doesn't allow the physical door they've locked, out of fear, to keep Him out of their lives. And, when the Spirit comes upon the Disciples with such power in Acts, immediately they throw open the doors to tell the world about Jesus.

And, tell the world they do; because all those people listed in the reading from Acts represent the entirety of the then known world.

The Church, because she's indwelt by the Holy Spirit, isn't restricted to one nation, one time in history, one class of people.

She is Catholic - Universal - embracing all people in every age, and walk of life.

And the language she speaks is the language of: The Word [who] became flesh and lived among us." Jn. 1: 14

In the Letter to the Romans Paul says: "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Rm. 8: 9

He is the One - the only One - who breaks down the barriers between us, and binds us together in true unity.

Without the Spirit of Christ, the whole of humanity is fragmented, broken, and centred in on itself.

And the Lord's Church is the one place where people: "From every nation under heaven." Acts 2: 5 are unified, and speak, and understand the same language.

The language of the Risen One: Jesus, who has gone through the agony of the Cross, and the ecstasy of the Resurrection to reconcile us to the Father.

We can rely on this with certainty because of those words of the Lord in today's Gospel: "When the Father sends the Advocate as my representative - that is the Holy Spirit - he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you." Jn. 14: 26

He speaks to us from the Lord's heart to tell us: "About the wonderful things God has done." Acts 2: 11

Not just what the Lord has done for His people in the past: He's still doing wonderful things for us now, and will continue doing for us, until He returns in glory at the end of the ages.

And, you know, THE wonderful thing the Father's done for us is that we: "Received God's Spirit when he adopted [us by our Baptism] as his own children." Rm. 8: 15

Not just any old children, but children refashioned into the image of Jesus, the Son; as Paul so beautifully describes it in Romans: "Together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory." Rm. 8: 17

Through the waters of Baptism, the living water that is the Holy Spirit is given to us so that we have the ability to think, and act in accordance with God, in accordance with the Holy Spirit.

To be a Christian is something to be cherished, treasured, and accepted with joyful thanks as the greatest gift The Lord can give you.

Sadly, many of us live as if we'd given the gift back, and were pagans; good pagans, yes, but not Spirit-filled Christians.

And yet, right at the beginning of the second reading, Paul says:

"You are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Rm. 8: 8

"We all know that water is essential for life: it quenches our thirst, washes us, makes the land fertile, for without water we die.

The 'living water,' the Holy Spirit, Gift of the Risen One who abides in us, purifies us, enlightens us, renews us, and transforms us so that we might be made to participate in the very life of God who is Love." Pope Francis: Wednesday Audience May 8 2013

This is the precious gift that the Holy Spirit brings to our hearts: the very life of God, the life of true children, a relationship of confidence so that we can call God: "Abba, Father [Daddy]. Rm. 8: 15

The Holy Spirit gives us freedom, and trust in the mercy of God, which also has the effect of a new vision of others, seen always as brothers and sisters in Jesus to respect and love.

The Holy Spirit teaches us to see with the eyes of Jesus.

That's why the 'living water' that is the Holy Spirit quenches the thirst of our lives, because He tells us that we're loved by God as children, that we can love God as His children, and that, with His grace, we can live as children of God, as Jesus does.