

Pentecost 2018 SML
JN 20:19-23

Jewish feasts have a triple basis:

1. Jewish feasts celebrate man's search for God through nature
2. Jewish feasts recall a past saving act of God
3. Jewish feasts held hope for an upcoming saving act of God that the Jews awaited.

It would make perfect sense then, that since Jewish feasts held hope for a saving act awaited, God's activity often occurred during Jewish feasts:

1. The Jewish Feast of Passover recalled that great saving act of God, namely when the angel of death "pass"ed "over" the homes of the Israelites and went into the homes of the Egyptians to kill their first born. During the Feast of Passover, Our Blessed Lord changed the bread and wine into His Body and Blood. MK 14
2. The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles recalled the Israelite journey through the desert from Egypt to the Promised Land, and the miracle of Moses bringing water from the rock. During the Feast of Tabernacles, Our Blessed Lord forgave the woman caught in adultery. JN 7-8
3. The Jewish Feast of Hanukkah recalled the reconsecration of the Temple after it was desecrated in

164 BC. During the Feast of Hanukkah, Our Blessed Lord revealed that he was the Son of God. JN 10

4. Note this morning's first reading begins, "When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled . . . This is a reference to the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, which recalled the giving of the law to Moses, which occurred on the fiftieth day of the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. It also celebrated the end of the harvest. It was during the Jewish Feast of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. AA 2

Today's solemnity warrants some background on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost.

Devout Jews from every nation under heaven traveled to the holy city of Jerusalem at least one time in their lives, to celebrate before God at least one of the great Jewish feasts. One such feast or festival which drew them by the hundreds and the thousands was the Feast of Weeks, also called Pentecost, because it came fifty days after Passover. Next to Passover, Pentecost was second in importance of the great Jewish feasts. The feast had a twofold purpose. First, Pentecost commemorated the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, which, according to Exodus (19:1), took place on the fiftieth day after the departure from Egypt. Second, at this

festival, leavened loaves of bread, the first two baked from the wheat harvest of that year, were offered to the Lord God.

In the year Our Blessed Lord, the Jewish Feast of Pentecost also fell fifty days after His Resurrection, ten days after He ascended into heaven, and on the same day as the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, when Our Blessed Mother and the Apostles gathered in one place on the morning of that remarkable day, Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims celebrating the Jewish Feast of Pentecost. All the world was represented there, and thousands heard the stirring of the Baby Church at birth . . .

Suddenly, without warning, a sound whistled down from heaven, swept through the streets, and whirled into the house where the Blessed Mother and the Apostles were. It was an urgent noise, like a high wind screaming, so that the multitude of devout people followed it were bewildered, and they beheld a sacred sight, and they heard a holy wonder!

Resting on the head of each was a fiery tongue, and with their fleshly tongues and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they were speaking of the mighty works of God. And the wonder was that every foreigner clearly understood what they were saying, for they were speaking in every language of every

nation under heaven. Today's second reading was proclaimed in another language. We did not understand it, but if it were the first Pentecost, it would have been read in French/German/German and heard in English. And it was the Holy Spirit who gave them the utterance.

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Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gives utterance to the Church that we receive the Holy Spirit as well, and this utterance has liturgical expression in all seven sacraments, particularly in the Eucharist.

The word is epiclesis, or the calling of the Holy Spirit. At the consecration at the Mass, there are three epiclesis. The altar server rings the consecration bells three times, each time calling attention to an epiclesis or the calling of the Holy Spirit upon the altar:

1. the first time, to bless these gifts to make them holy
2. the second time, to change the bread into the Body of Christ
3. the third time to change the wine into the Blood of Christ.

Just as the elements of the Eucharist do not look any different, feel any different, smell any different or taste any different, they are different. They are truly, really and substantially the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Blessed Lord.

So it is with us at Baptism: the calling of the Holy Spirit upon the water of Baptism to literally change the baptized into a child of God. They don't look any different or feel any different, but they are different.

So it is with us at Confirmation: the calling of the Holy Spirit upon the Confirmandi to literally change the Confirmandi into an adult witness for Christ. They don't look any different or feel any different, but they are different.

So it is with married couples at Matrimony: yesterday's wedding at the calling of the Holy Spirit upon Eric and Taylor to literally change the couple into husband and wife for the rest of their lives. They don't look any different or feel any different, but they are different.

Yesterday morning at the Ordination. The calling of the Holy Spirit as the Bishop laid hands on the ordinand, to literally changing Christopher - kneeling down a man, standing up a priest, at yesterday's ordination, kneeling down a man,

standing up a deacon. Christopher didn't look any different or feel any different, but he is different.

If you are like me, wouldn't you love to feel different. Granted there is a difference between the baptized before and after Baptism, and the confirmed, and the married, and the ordained. But wouldn't you love to feel the Holy Spirit?

The charismatic prayer movement is famous for their healing Masses. While many are skeptical about this type of prayer, I am not, as I have been "slain in the Spirit" on more than one occasion, probably about ten times in my life time, most of those times when I was fighting my depression, as I was a frequent attender of Healing Masses, praying and hoping for an end to my depression. For me, what added validity to being slain in the Spirit is every time I am prayed over, I was not slain. If that was the case, it would be more cause and effect than the prompting of the Holy Spirit. And when one is slain in the Spirit, you literally feel different. There is no other way to describe it than "resting in the Holy Spirit." The priest prays over you, there is someone there behind you to catch you, and you feel yourself go back, they lower you to the floor and you rest in the Holy Spirit, for maybe a minute or so, and then you're fine.

I do not have the gift of helping people to be “slain in the Spirit.” Very few people on whom I lay my hands are slain in the Spirit. So at the healing Masses I concelebrate, I’ll talk to people coming in to the Mass, and I’ll tell them, “If you want to be slain in the Spirit, get in his line. If you’re not sure, get in mine.” That’s why St. Mary of the Lakes offers Anointing Mass in the fall. I don’t have the gift to slay in the Spirit.

However, when you are slain in the Spirit, you cannot interpret it. You truly feel you are in God’s presence, which in and of itself is a blessed moment, but you do not walk away with a message from God or a goal, or anything like that. Being slain is being with and resting in the Holy Spirit.

The calling of the Holy Spirit at Baptism, Penance, Eucharist, Confirmation, Matrimony, Holy Orders and Anointing of the Sick, the calling of the Holy Spirit is predicted as the Holy Spirit descends every time, and it is interpreted: child of God, forgiveness of Sin, Body and Blood, etc.

Being slain in the Spirit is an “is what it is.” It cannot be predicted. It cannot be interpreted. It’s a free gift given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Today’s Feast of Pentecost recalls that first Pentecost event that was not predicted or interpreted, fiery tongues and

fleshly tongues that gave utterance by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today's Feast of Pentecost asks us to receive the Holy Spirit through the sacraments as frequently as possible, and to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as determined, not by us, but by God.