

PENTECOST: WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

This Sunday is the solemn feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is the conclusion of the Easter Season which began with the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus from the grave. Forty days later we celebrated the solemn feast of the Ascension when Jesus bid farewell to his disciples and rose up into Heaven. Then twelve days later we now celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and disciples. This is really the birthday of our Church for it was on this day that the Apostles and disciples went out into the open and began to publicly proclaim the word of God as given them by Jesus Christ. From this day on, the Church began to grow, first in Jerusalem but then very quickly throughout all of Asia Minor, the Greek and Roman world.

Just who is the Holy Spirit? This is an important question since the answer shows that the work of redemption of the human race was the work of God, a triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God of his very essence is a trinity of persons. Now it is easy to understand the meaning of father and son. Everyone alive has experienced what it means to be a mother and father. God the father is infinite in his knowledge and he understands and knows himself so well and his knowledge is so absolutely perfect of himself that this knowledge is totally him yet totally distinct. The Son is totally God exactly as his father. Note how often, especially in the Gospel of St. John, that Christ says that he and the father are one.

Now where does the Holy Spirit come into the picture. This is a bit more difficult to describe, but perhaps what will help is for one to think about their absolutely best friend, one with whom they can share everything, one whom they trust totally, one whom they hold nothing secret no matter what. When one is with such a friend they are aware of themselves individually and very much aware of their friendship. In fact, their friendship is a relationship so real that somehow they almost feel its presence as something there yet at the same time distinct from them. In the trinity, God the Father loves his son and the son in turn loves his father, their love being absolute, infinite and eternal. This relationship is so real that it is them yet distinct from each of them. This is the Holy Spirit; it is an infinite living love, a real person coming from two distinct persons. The Holy Spirit is simply total, infinite, eternal, living love.

Having said all this and having given, hopefully, some idea of what is happening, how it all works will forever be a mystery. It is beyond human abilities to totally understand the true nature of our God. The day will come when hopefully we will all see our God and will get some idea of his nature. Add to this the statement made by John the Apostle that when that happens we will see how we are like him. What awaits us is beyond our comprehension, beyond our human ability to really understand. It is all part of what it means when we believe that our God, a trinity of persons, truly loves each of us.

On this feast day of Pentecost celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the small group of Apostles and disciples, it is important to realize that now the third person of the Trinity is becoming actively involved with continuing the work of Jesus through all future believers. It is the Holy Spirit who down through the ages has guided the Church founded by Jesus in its growth and in its day to day living out its commitment to the teaching of Jesus. The long history of the Church has not always been glorious and at times definitely seemed headed in

the wrong direction but each time this happened, it was the Holy Spirit who helped guide the Church forward on its long journey to the end of this world. How did all this happen? The Holy Spirit is never far away and has inspired many a man and woman to give their all in serving the people of God in every age. As various heresies appeared and threatened to disrupt the life of the Church, the lives of the people of God, many individuals were called by the Holy Spirit to champion the fight against them. Under the aegis of the Holy Spirit, these men and women have risked their lives in defending the true faith, buoyed up by the Holy Spirit's infinite power. Many actually gave their lives as martyrs and became examples of true love for their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, their God and their Savior.

This process has consistently happened time and time again down through two thousand years to the present day. Each age has seen different problems and different teachings. Each age has produced both enemies and friends, devils and saints. And in each age, the most unlikely of persons have been called and have responded to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Our present age is no different from all the past ages. The same ideologies the same arguments, the same false principles are being propagated countless times, each time with new clothes with new and novel presentations but underneath it all the exact same false promises and shattered hopes. There is really nothing new under the sun. Technology and modern marvels make it all seem so new and good, but just as in the past the truth ultimately comes to the fore.

The present age in which we all live is no different than past ages. Greed is still very much a part of the human condition. The utopia of happiness is still very much the goal of almost everyone, something which today is preached as possible so easily and readily through the use of drugs, liquor or sex, or all three. It is the time of the "me" generation, always putting one's self first before all else. Selfishness along with rampant material-ism is not only the rule of the day but is preached constantly through the marvels of modern technology and the computer era with the internet. Cyberspace has become the stage for unlimited false hopes along with dashed promises and broken lives, most all hidden within a person's private psyche and crushed smiles.

Today is really no different from all the past ages; if different, it is in the speed with which one can be destroyed and trodden under. The victims number in untold thousands, becoming walking specters of what they once were or hoped to be. It is not a pretty picture. But there actually is a glimmer of hope, a beacon of light rising in the distance, a gentle pull on so many to begin to change their ways. This is all the work of the Holy Spirit who is still very much alive and active in the word today just as he has always been so close to the humans he loves so much. The Catholic Church today seems to be in peril with so much press about scandals and wrong doing. And there are liturgical fights among those who should know better. Many wonder where it is all heading. But one must never forget that the Holy Spirit is still very much alive and active in our world today as well as within the Church. There are signs of a return to true doctrine, true liturgies, true justice and true faith. More and more of the young are beginning to think that they are being called to higher standards, to ways of being of service to others, and for some to being called to a closer union with their God and savior. Never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit. Divine Love is what the world needs so much now and through chosen individuals, the Holy Spirit is beginning to show that love in real ways. God, all three persons, have not given up on us. Pray that when we are called we will step up to the plate.

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