

Pentecost Day - 3

Acts 2:1-11, 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13, Jn 14:15-16, 23b-26

There are a lot of things expected of us on a regular basis. People look to us to get things done. Teachers expect one thing, co-workers another, family other things too, and God other things. Jesus promised around the time of his death and resurrection that he was not going to leave us alone. That's not just a cute saying. It's not just saying: "I'll be there in your thoughts, and hearts and minds." It's not about: "I left behind a set of principles to live by - and so you have me in those." He meant something more than this, something that we can both take advantage of, and are called to be part of each day.

Today we celebrate the feast of Pentecost. When the disciples in the upper room - scared and not sure what was going to happen after Jesus' ascension - huddled together praying. Jesus had risen from the tomb, he was there again - then he was gone - they were not sure how Jesus was going to fulfill his promises. They were not sure how they were going to do all the things that their family and friends, their followers, and Jesus himself were expecting. They must have really felt they needed something big - then they got the surprise of their lives. As they were waiting there the Spirit came powerfully to them. This was not some sort of mental experience - it was an actual presence of God in a new way. They began to see how Jesus was going to be with them - and this power of God is still with us.

We hear of this pouring out of the Spirit in the first reading: *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.* This passage speaks of the actual effect of the Spirit's presence. People able to do things that they could not do before, because the Spirit was with them and because the Spirit was acting through them. The Spirit was poured out on them, and now like Jesus had promised, they were given abilities. You may say - "when do I get these abilities"? Well it's not like superpowers from a Marvel Comics movie - sometimes we want that, and it would be cool! But it is more subtle.

Sometimes in times of great need the Spirit will come up within us and we do things that we would never expect - these are the "I don't know how I did it but ..." times. Many of those "extraordinary" feats you have accomplished were the work of the Spirit (but we do like to take credit for them anyway). More often the working of the Spirit is quiet, giving us just as much as

we need, so that we have to put in our own part too. If God just did it for us, or gave us an extraordinary miraculous power (which does happen in rare situations) then we are denied the participation in the work of the Spirit. At other times, the Spirit helps us in unique ways. We heard in our second reading: *There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit ... To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.* The way the Spirit shows itself in each person's life, the way that the Spirit gifts each person is different - but as we hear, it is always for a benefit. The Spirit helps us through our gifts in daily life, and the Spirit also helps us to pray. Sometimes when you are deep in prayer and loose your words and sit in silence, the Spirit is the one doing the talking for you. When a resolution occurs - its not chance, it is an answer to the prayers that the Spirit placed on our behalf. When your gifts benefit your situation or someone else's, this is the Spirit too.

It's not just about having the Spirit come down and magically do things to fix our problems. It is about us cooperating with the action of the Spirit, putting out part in with that of the Spirit that allows that Spirit to work through us and take care of our own problems and those of others. When we drink of the Spirit we participate more fully in our role as a part of the Body of Christ - just as the Spirit moving others can become the ways our prayers are answered - so too we have to respond to what the Spirit calls us to do so that we can be both recipient of that gift of the Spirit and also the instrument of that Spirit in the lives of others. Jesus said in the Gospel: *As the Father has sent me, so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.* The action of the Spirit that helps us sometimes flows through the action of someone else to get to us - we are called to also be the conduit, the pipe, through which the Spirit flows to others. Regular prayer will help us to both sense the presence of the Spirit in our lives, and also help us to see how we are called to act in the Spirit to be the ways that God answers the prayers of others.

So when you are not sure what to do, or how you will be able to do it - you can open that valve and let the Spirit flow. You might just be surprised how things seem to work themselves out. Over time, and through prayer and study, you get to understand better how to do this - and as you do - you will experience more fully the presence of Jesus who has not left us alone, but sends the Spirit to us - and through us he brings the Spirit to a world that desperately needs it.