

One of my uncles is a very talented musician who plays several instruments. His favorite is the harmonica or as he calls it the Blues Harp. He played in several bands when he was younger but as he got older, he left behind his band playing. Shortly before he was to get married his friends wanted to have a bachelor party for him, but he didn't want that kind of a party. He asked them to take him to see a Blues Band that was playing at a night club. His friends agreed and without his knowing they asked the Blues Band if he could join them for one song and they agreed. The Blues Band invited him up to play his Blues Harp and the people loved him; they were all dancing and cheering. When he finished and sat down the band leader went over to the place on stage where my uncle was playing, and he looked down at the floor and said, "that guy was on fire! And look he even burned a hole in the rug."

In our Gospel this weekend we hear Jesus say, "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" Jesus has come to set us on fire, not with the things of the world but with the power of the Holy Spirit. He wants us to be on fire, that is, on fire with His love. He has given each of us this gift of the Holy Spirit that we received at Baptism and strengthened at Confirmation. This is the gift that He won for us on the Cross; the Baptism that He was anxious to undergo for love of the Father and for love of us.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace and He desires that all of us believe in Him, follow Him, and share in His peace that He offers to us. Sadly, so many people are indifferent to His love and the price that He paid to free us from sin and to restore us as children of the Father. This rejection of Jesus is what causes division in our families and in society.

In our first reading from the prophet Jeremiah, the princes accused Jeremiah of demoralizing the soldiers and the people. Jeremiah was prophesying that the soldiers and the people were to be handed over to their enemies. The princes with the King's permission tried to silence him by lowering him into an abandoned cistern. Jeremiah sank into the mud inside the cistern and was left there to die. Eventually, Ebed-melech the court official came to his rescue and convinced the king to release the Lord's prophet.

God has given us this awesome and powerful gift of His Holy Spirit and we should be on fire with this gift. People should see this fire within us, that is, they should recognize the love we have for God and our love for everyone else. When we fail to use this gift we are like Jeremiah in the cistern stuck in the mud awaiting death. The gifts given to us are wasted and unable to help us and help others. God sent Ebed-melech a non-Jew to convince the King to do the right thing by releasing the Lord's prophet. God is always trying to get us out of the mire of sin and worldly attractions that keep us from being on fire with His love. He is always sending us grace upon grace.

He desires that His Priests be on fire with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He gives them so many gifts at the day of their Ordination with the hope that they will use them to set His people on fire with His love. How awesome it is when a Priest is on fire with the Holy Spirit; when people leave the Confessional and say, "wow, that Priest is on fire" or after Mass and listening to his homily they are so moved and recognize the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The Priest who is on fire with the Holy Spirit is like a fisherman with a large net bringing in many souls to be saved.

Jesus desires that the world be ablaze. He wants all of us to believe in Him, to follow Him, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, the fire of His love.