



PARISH OF ST. AGATHA

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Pope Francis: 'The Holy Spirit gives us courage, hope and faith'

Pope Francis reflects on the action of the Holy Spirit who is "like a strong and freely flowing wind" and invites the faithful to open their hearts to the gift of the Spirit and go out to witness to the Lord's love. On Pentecost Sunday Pope Francis invited the faithful to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit and go out in the world with courage, hope and faith to witness to the love of the Risen Jesus Christ.

The Pope reflected on the book of the Acts of the Apostles that recounts what happened in Jerusalem 50 days after the Pasch of Jesus.

He recalled that the disciples were gathered in the Upper Room, and the Virgin Mary was with them. They had been told by Risen Lord to remain in the city until they received the gift of the Spirit from on High. This, the Pope said, "was revealed with a 'sound' they suddenly heard come from heaven, like the 'rush of a mighty wind' that filled the house they were in." It concerns, he explained, a real but also symbolic experience, and "it reveals that the Holy Spirit is like a strong and freely flowing wind. He cannot be controlled, stopped, nor measured; nor can his direction be foreseen."

The Spirit is the Lord, the giver of Life

The Holy Spirit, Pope Francis continued, cannot be understood within our human exigencies, in our methods and our preconceptions: "The Spirit proceeds from God the Father and from his Son Jesus Christ and bursts upon the Church – upon each one of us –, giving life to our minds and our hearts. As the Creed states: he is 'the Lord, the giver of life'". The Pope went on to explain that on the day of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples were still disoriented and fearful, and lacked the courage to go out in the open.

"We too, at times, prefer to remain within the protective walls of our surroundings. But the Lord knows how to reach us and open the doors to our hearts. He sends upon us the Holy Spirit who envelops us and overpowers all our hesitations, tears down our defences, dismantles our false certainties. The Spirit makes us new creatures, just as he did that day with the Apostles," he said. And after having received the Holy Spirit, the Pope continued, they were no longer as they were before, "but went out and began to preach that Jesus is risen, he is the Lord, in such a way that each one understood them in his or her own language."

The Spirit changes the Heart

The Pope said that the Spirit changed the heart and broadened the disciples' view enabling them "to communicate to everyone the great, limitless works of God, surpassing the cultural and religious confines within which they were accustomed to thinking and living."

"The Holy Spirit puts different people in communication, achieving the unity and universality of the Church," he said.

The Pope concluded by inviting the faithful to open their hearts to the gift of the Spirit, "which makes us feel all the beauty and truth of God's love in the dead and Risen Christ," spurring us to go out, to witness to this Love that always precedes us with his mercy."

"The world, he said, needs the courage, hope and faith of the disciples of Christ. It needs us to become yeast, leaven, salt and light in different situations and in the many cultural and social contexts. And the Holy Spirit alone creates all this."

(Vatican News/ Linda Bordoni).

THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BEGINS: BIRTH OF CHURCH

Today marks 50 days from the Solemnity of the Resurrection, and we celebrate the spiritual birth of the Apostolic Catholic Church, called Pentecost. It also marks the conclusion of the Easter Season. When Jesus, the Son of God the Father, in His Human Nature, completed His work on earth, the Holy Spirit's mission began and was sent down from Heaven on Pentecost Sunday. The word Pentecost means fifty. **The Spirit is the first gift of the Risen Jesus, and is given above all for the forgiveness of sins.** Here we see the beginning of the Church, **the glue that holds us together**, which is *forgiveness*. Because forgiveness is the gift of the highest degree and is the greatest love of all. **It preserves unity, prevents collapse and strengthens. Forgiveness sets our hearts free and enables us to start afresh. Forgiveness gives Hope. Without forgiveness, the Church is not built up.**

OUR BODIES ARE TEMPLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit dwells in the Church and in our hearts as in a temple. He prays in us and bears witness in us to our adoption as Children of God. Mary is present in the Upper Room and she is the Mother of the Church. We will celebrate her role on her feast day. The Spirit leads the Church into all Truth and gives it unity in communion and in service. **The Spirit endows us with gifts of Wisdom, Understanding, Courage, Counsel, Knowledge, Holiness and a Reverence and respectful Fear of God, who will Judge us someday.** This is not a man-made fear. Those who live their lives according to their own standards and laws, rejecting God and having no fear of Divine Law on earth, will know all about Fear, when standing before Our Lord as Judge, in the Heavenly Courtroom. Yes, He is all Mercy. However, He will forgive us in the same way as we forgave and loved one another or not. The Holy Spirit creates the desire to make Peace with God **and be One in Him.**

COME LORD JESUS

By the power of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit enables the Church to grow young and its members to become child-like in the virtue of humility. **The person who is filled with the Holy Spirit speaks in different languages. These different languages are different ways of witnessing to Christ, such as humility, poverty, patience and obedience; actions speak louder than words.** The Spirit perpetually renews the Church, by leading it to complete Communion with its Bridegroom, who is Christ. We, the Members of the Church are the Bride. This New Marriage is called the New Covenant. It is like the New Wine at Cana and we are the vessels, overflowing with the Holy Spirit, as like the New Wine. The Spirit and the Bride (us) say to Jesus, the Bridegroom: **Come! As in 'Thy Kingdom Come'! Wherever Jesus is present there is the Kingdom. Come Jesus' Holy Spirit into our hearts.** In this way the Church reveals itself alive as a Living Body of Believers, whose Unity and Love has its source in the Unity and Love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT ACTIVATES OUR FAITH IN BAPTISM

Faith is awakened and kept alive by the Spirit of Truth, which supports us to apply it more perfectly in our lives. The Holy Spirit is a Person (Third Person of the Holy Trinity), who becomes visible in us when we exercise works of charity, mercy, love, patience, tolerance, kindness and peace towards each other. **Fire purifies metal and wastelands and seeing the Tongues of Fire descend on the disciples, teaches us that we have a duty to bear witness, by using our tongues as pure instruments to teach and speak from the Gospel of Purity.** The Word of God, when practiced, purifies our souls and hearts and those who listen. The Spirit gives us the Courage not to lock and hide ourselves away, but to always come forward to worship and open our lips - so that our tongues can announce God's praise at home and in His House. Keep safe and God bless, Fr. Brendan.