

THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Today we celebrate Pentecost, marking the descent of the Holy Spirit, enabling the Church to grow and perpetually renew itself from generation to generation with Mary as its Mother. Pentecost celebrates the official birth of the Church. The Spirit became visible in tongues of fire (Acts 2:1-11), because we are called to set the world on fire with our faith and to verbally bear witness to the Word of God and His marvels, speaking in the language of Truth and Peace. The flames also represent the fire of God's love for us. The Holy Spirit indicates at Pentecost, that this was the way in which the Lord's promise was fulfilled: *No one puts new wine into old wineskins. New wine is put into fresh skins, and so both are preserved* (Mk 2:22). The disciples had now become fresh wineskins, renewed and made holy by grace. The new wine of the Holy Spirit filled them, so that their faith brimmed over and they spoke in manifold tongues. By this spectacular miracle they became a sign of the Catholic Church, which communicates Christ's work of salvation, through the liturgy of the Church. It embraces the language of love and mercy and confession in the name of Jesus Christ.

SPIRITUAL V UNSPIRITUAL

The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life and wisdom now, and will raise us from the dead. However, for this to happen, we must open our hearts to allow Him spiritualise and divinise us here on earth. Everyone moved by the Spirit is a child of God (Rom 8:8-17). The unspiritual have given themselves over to Satan. The Spirit is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, and is the active presence of Jesus on earth. He becomes visible in the Church and its Sacraments. The Holy Spirit is the Advocate, the One who teaches and unfolds the teachings of Christ. He supports our desire to get to heaven. He is the fire and light that drives away the darkness of sin and the coldness of hate. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are transformed into a new creature. We cannot belong to Jesus unless we crucify our ego and kill all self-indulgent passions and desires within our hearts. St. Paul tells us that all selfish passions, gross indecency and sexual irresponsibility, idolatry and sorcery (witchcraft and depending on fortune tellers), are not the work of the Holy Spirit but that of the devil (Gal 5:16-25).

ONE LANGUAGE OF UNITY IN FAITH AND PEACE

It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ was conceived and brought alive in the womb of the Virgin Mary. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that makes the bread and wine come alive on the Altar to become the Body and Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion at Mass. The Holy Spirit makes us fit for God's purpose by changing sinners into saints. We are reborn by grace. The Holy Spirit washes away our sins in confession giving us new life to begin again. Showing us His wounds reminds us of our sins (Jn 20:19-23). The Spirit instils into us His life-giving power, awakening our souls from the spiritual death of sin. The instinct of faith is awakened and kept alive in us by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit pours His grace into our hearts and equips us with an eagerness to perform various activities and responsibilities that benefit the Church's renewal. All gifts of the Spirit, should be accepted with a sense of gratitude and compassion, because they answer and serve the needs of the Church and each other. One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is to instil a fear for the Day of Judgement. We pray in hope, to be saved, since we are not saved yet (Rom 8:5-27). Like parched ground, which yields no harvest, unless it receives moisture, we too, need the abundant 'rainfall' of the Spirit, to be able to produce the fruits of holiness, purity, love, mercy and peace. St Paul urges us to; *Bear with one another in love; do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph 4:3). Notice that when Paul urges us to bear with one another, he bases his argument on love, and when he speaks of our hope of unity, he emphasises the bond of peace. The Holy Spirit's mission is to convert the world not for the world to convert the Holy Spirit and the Church. God bless, Fr Brendan.