

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST
Acts 2:1-11; Ps 104; 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13; Jn 20:19-23
June 5, 2022
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On this solemnity of Pentecost, we honor God the Holy Spirit and thank Him for coming into the world and into the Church. Every year at Pentecost, we pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church, and it's also a great time to deepen our appreciation for everything that He does and *wants to do* in our lives and in the Church.

After Jesus founded and established the Church as His Body here on earth, He sent the Holy Spirit to animate and vivify the Church, which is what happened at Pentecost. Jesus is the visible Head of His Body the Church (cf. Col 1:18), but the Holy Spirit is the invisible heart and soul of the Church (cf. 1Cor 3:16).¹ And this means that the Holy Spirit is the One who gives the Church life and energy and an impetus to action. The Holy Spirit is the One who keeps the members of the Church faithful to the teachings of Christ and motivates the members of the Church to act with courage and strength. As we heard in the Gospel, Jesus told His disciples, "*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you*" (Jn 14:26).

Without the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, the Church would be a lifeless corpse and nothing more than a natural, human institution. But because of the action of the Holy Spirit, the Church is a *supernatural* institution, full of members who are inspired to live and act with supernatural virtue. It's good for us, though, to remember and consider more precisely how the Holy Spirit acts in our lives, so that we can appreciate what He does for us and then cooperate with what He *wants to do* in our lives and in the Church.

In the beautiful Sequence for Pentecost, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, the Church prays:

*Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine! ...
You, of comforters the best;
You, the soul's most welcome guest;
Sweet refreshment here below; ...*

¹ See also *Lumen Gentium*, 7: "In order that we might be unceasingly renewed in Him, He has shared with us His Spirit who, existing as one and the same being in the Head and in the members, gives life to, unifies and moves through the whole body. This He does in such a way that His work could be compared by the holy Fathers with the function which the principle of life, that is, the soul, fulfills in the human body."

*Solace in the midst of woe. ...
Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:
Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.*

This great prayer and hymn to the Holy Spirit summarizes the role that the Holy Spirit wants to play in our lives. It is He who enlightens us when we are confused, comforts and consoles us when we are burdened and troubled, heals us when we are afflicted, strengthens us when we are weak and sustains us when we are weary, and melts our hearts and stubborn wills when we might be resisting a life of virtue. The Holy Spirit is the One who guides us in life and prompts us with good suggestions and resolutions in our prayer. He's the One who purifies us and helps us to resist temptations, and He moves us to action when we are holding back due to fear. In all these ways, the Holy Spirit acts in us, and by extension, throughout the Church, to animate and vivify the Church. Without the Holy Spirit, the Church would be a lifeless corpse.

But we need to be receptive to and cooperate with this action of the Holy Spirit, in order for the effects of His work to shine in the Church and our lives. And we need to invite the Holy Spirit to be our "*soul's most welcome guest.*"

When God the Son came into the world, He was revealed in the form of a baby, lying in a manger. When God the Holy Spirit descended from Heaven, He was revealed by fire and wind, and also by a new ability in those upon whom He descended. In the first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, we heard how when the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles at Pentecost, "*there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.*"

Each of us needs to ask and invite the Holy Spirit to be at work in our souls by blowing away the clouds of confusion and doubt and despair, by burning up the temptations to vanity and jealousy and resentment and bitterness or the refusal to forgive. So often, we are held back in the spiritual and moral life by our soul's stubbornness and unwillingness to let go of insults and offenses. When this happens, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to send His purifying fire to burn up in us whatever holds us back and to "*bend the stubborn heart and will.*" If we do this, the action of the Holy Spirit will be more visible in each of our lives and throughout the whole Church.