

Out of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit let's talk about the gift of fear of the Lord: Do not ride in automobiles: they are responsible for 20% of fatal accidents. Do not stay home: 1% of all accidents occur in home. Do not walk on the streets or sidewalks: 14% of all accidents occur at such times. Do not travel by air, rail, or water: 16% of all accidents happen on planes, trains or boats. Only .001% of all deaths occur in worship services in Church, and these are usually related to previous physical disorders. Hence, the safest place for you to be at any time is at Church!!!

Last Sunday we celebrated the feast of Ascension and saw how Jesus had commissioned the Apostles to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Sam-aria and to the ends of the earth. How did they react to this commandment ? Just the opposite of what they were supposed to have done. Instead to going out to the ends of the earth these Apostles hid themselves. They were afraid of the Jews. Untill they received the Holy Spirit. And today we remember the great event called the Pentecost.

Pentecost literally means 50<sup>th</sup> in Greek language. It is a feast celebrated on the 50th day after the Passover feast by the Jews even to this day. It was on this Jewish Pentecost day, the Holy Spirit came on the disciples of Jesus. Hence, Christians also celebrate the feast of Pentecost on the 50th day after the feast of the Resurrection of Jesus. Both the Jews and the Christians now celebrate Pentecost.

The first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, describes in detail the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Disciples and the miraculous transformation that took place during the first Pentecost, thus fulfilling Jesus' promise to his apostles. There was first "a noise like a strong driving wind." Then there were "tongues as of fire" resting on the disciples, and each of them was filled with the Holy Spirit. The first manifestation of their reception of the Holy Spirit came when the apostles began to proclaim the Good News of Jesus, and everyone there -regardless of their many different native languages, was able to understand them "in his own tongue." The Jews in the crowds came from sixteen different geographical regions. The miracle of tongues on Pentecost thus reverses the confusion of tongues wrought by God at the Tower of Babel, as described in Genesis 11.

The Gospel of today gives us a different version of the coming of the Holy Spirit. It was given to them directly by Risen Christ himself. Jesus' disciples were hiding in fear behind locked doors. As followers of Jesus they were afraid they may have to face arrest or even worse. Suddenly, they experience the presence of Jesus among them. He gives them the usual Jewish greeting 'Shalom' or peace then gives them the mission: "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." Then he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." He tells them that those whose sins they forgive, they are forgiven and those whose sins they retain, they are retained.

The feast of Pentecost marks the beginning of the Church or birthday of the church. The activity of the spirit was the core understanding of the early church. The Spirit instructed the early missionaries and guided the proclamation of the mission of salvation. It was responsible for the conversions into new faith, gave them strength in times of persecutions, was the inspiration of the early journeys of Paul and others and was responsible for the inclusion of non-Jews into the church .

All of us share the same mission of Jesus given to the Apostles through our baptism. And we all have been given the same Holy Spirit which came down on the Apostles on the feast day of Pentecost. So, the Holy Spirit reminds us, that we have a mission. Our mission is to tell everybody the Good News that God is their Father, that God is the Father of us all, that in spite of all the visible difference of language and culture and social status, we are all one family and should therefore live as brothers and sisters. Our mission is to break the barriers between "us" and "them," between male and female, between Jew and Gentile, between rich and poor, between Black and White, between First World and Third World, and to bring all humankind to speak the one universal language of love. This is possible only through the working of the Holy Spirit.