

Homily – June 8th, 2025 - Pentecost

As I mentioned last weekend, the four gospel writers aren't always on the same page, chronologically, when they write about the events of Jesus' life including the



timing of the great events of Ascension or Pentecost. In fairness to them, they are not primarily trying to give us an historical or a chronological account of Jesus' life. They are

attempting to convey spiritual truths about Jesus, truths that are meant to form us here and now, in 2025.

I suppose it's the same way with us. If you were to ask me to describe my late mother, I would give you one version—my version—but my seven siblings would have their own versions. Every one of them would be different, valid, and incomplete, on their own. What Jesus says about his own life, can be said about every human life, "I still have many things to say to you, but they would be too much for you to bear now. So sit tight and wait. I'll send you my Spirit—the Spirit of truth—who will lead you into the complete truth" (Jn. 16:12-13). It seems, we still need the spirit of those, who have gone before us in death, to lead us into the complete truth of who they were while they walked the earth with us.

One variance of the Pentecost story is that it didn't happen 50 days after Easter Sunday, but that it happened on the evening of Easter Sunday. Today's gospel, John's version, starts with, ***"It was evening on the day Jesus rose from the dead,***

the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews" (Jn. 20:19). On the same day of the resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples and breathes his Spirit onto them; that's Pentecost.

I'm sure you can all picture the scene. It seems that not only the 11 remaining Apostles were in that upper room, but also Mary and other men and women. "Apostles" refer to the original 12, but "disciples" refers to the larger circle of men and women who were followers of Jesus. We are the modern-day disciples of Jesus. Imagine these disciples locking themselves in the upper room and huddling in fear of what was outside. They weren't really a community as the only thing they had in common was fear. Hard to build a community on fear although cults thrive on fear. (We have cults outside the Church and cults inside the Church). And as long as fear ruled the disciples' lives, they remained a bunch of frightened individuals holed up in a room with no life flowing through them. Jesus' appearance, accompanied by his words, ***"Peace be with you"*** was enough for them to unbolt the doors, throw them open, and burst out of the narrow confines ablaze with a new fire and courage.

If I was among the disciples who ran from Jesus' suffering and death, just like he had predicted they would, I'm not so sure I would be looking forward to meeting the guy I abandoned any time soon. The shame would make me want to hide or buy a really good disguise...maybe one of those fake nose and glasses. Yet, Jesus didn't hold the disciples captive with, "Where were you when I needed you most?" He does something else instead. He shows them his wounds and twice

says, "Peace be with you." His very presence dispels their inner panic. His presence is known to them not so much because they see him with their eyes but because just sensing his presence their fear gets replaced by a peace that the world cannot give. Inner peace is the telltale sign, in your life, that you are in the presence of Jesus. What's wrong with the world's peace? It doesn't last. The world cannot sustain an abiding peaceful presence. The security of one moment is replaced by the anxiety of the next moment. You're at peace after receiving Communion, but 30 seconds later you're stressed out at the fact that your mother-in-law is coming for supper tonight. That's the world's peace; it's fleeting. You have a ceasefire in Gaza one day and the next day it's back to killing. That's the world's peace; it's here today and gone tomorrow. Jesus does not stop the chaos of the world. Rather, he is present within it, calming the heart, bringing lasting peace.

The showing of his wounds functions in a similar way as the words, "Peace be with you." Jesus is interiorly united to the Father. He's told us, "***The Father and I are one***" (Jn. 10:30). But this union of Jesus and the one Jesus calls "Abba" is not a private possession, an exclusive member's club. It's meant to be a flow, bringing life to all who are open to receiving it. Jesus' greatest praise was for people who were open to receiving his teaching. More often than not they were people outside his own Jewish faith, the non-Church goers, you might say. All he wanted to do was to give the love of God to people. All he wanted people to do was to receive it, with openness, regardless of whether they thought they were worthy or not. If people received the life he was giving away freely, it was like they were being born again. They felt alive like they never felt before.

The wounds, the Risen Lord appears with, are not scars that will eventually go away. They are the permanent channels that make available the interior life Jesus shares with God. And since Jesus holds nothing to himself, this eternal life flows out of his wounds into you and me. The wounds are the continuation of Jesus giving life to us. When he was pierced on the Cross, we are told that blood and water gushed from his side. The gushing of blood and water is universally connected to the process of birth. In his living, his dying, and in his resurrected state, Jesus is always doing the same thing—giving birth to you and me. Maybe that's why we say the feast of Pentecost is the birthday of the Church.

From the darkness of the upper room, much like a womb that couldn't contain them anymore, the disciples emerged born anew. That same Spirit is not given to us 2000 years later in some watered-down version of the original. It's given to us anew, with the same force that rocked the upper room. The divine life of God flowed from Jesus to his original disciples. It's given to us, and our job is to give it to others. Jesus held nothing back. Neither should we.

~Fr. Phil