

Today is Pentecost, a major feast day of the Church. Sometimes, we call it the birthday of the Church. In a way it is, but I always think of Easter as the beginning of things, but then, these assignments always fall short. How to you put a beginning on God? As Christians, we believe that God is timeless and his Creation is timeless. Matter may have formed in a moment of time, but that moment came from God's intent. Creation did not happen without God intending it to happen. God's purpose pre-existed Creation and God's purpose and God's will are synonymous. What am I saying? I'm saying that before the beginning of time, God had a purpose for the Creation that was to be, and that purpose was that the world would exist in godly harmony because of the redemptive work of his Christ. We talk of the Church as being the Body of Christ in the world today. As the Body, the Church exists to be Christ in the world.

Easter gives the Church grace, God's grace in Christ, and it is the Church's job to disseminate to that grace to the world. Grace is a transitional gift. The Church has grace but only to pass it on. Pentecost gives the Church the ability to disseminate God's grace because at Pentecost God gave the Church the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God in action, God making a difference, God empowering, doing, shaping, molding. The Holy Spirit is God the Enabler. We speak of God as one being in three forms or persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity but we can save trying to explain that until next Sunday, Trinity Sunday. Today celebrates God's empowering the Church for ministry to the world, the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The story in the second chapter of Acts tells it like it was. On the fiftieth day in Resurrected time, the Jewish Feast of Weeks, or *Pentecost* in the Greek of New Testament times, our Lord's disciples were together in a house somewhere in Jerusalem wondering what to do next. According to Saint Luke who wrote Acts, very suddenly there was a sound of rushing wind, there was dancing flames that lit things up but did not consume. Suddenly, the Apostles were given each and every gift of God that they would need to proclaim that Jesus is Lord. The Holy Spirit equipped the Apostles to know Christ and make him known, so that the entire world might know Jesus as Lord.

Think what you like about the foreign tongues part of the story. Charismatic Christians consider it the gift of speaking in tongues, glossolalia, or speaking in "unknown tongues." The problem with glossolalia is that no one understands it. These Pentecostal claims aside, glossolalia is not what Saint Luke is talking about in the Acts of the Apostles. On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostles spoke Aramaic just like they did every other day of the year. What happened is that everybody, including those who did not speak Aramaic heard what the Apostles were taking about and they understood it perfectly. They heard it in their native language. The Apostles' speech transcended language barriers because the Holy Spirit acted as interpreter. And, what the Apostles said that day is that God loves the world so much that he sent his only Son, to die for us that we might live as a forgiven people. The Apostles told the multitude that even though the world had killed

God's Son, Jesus Christ, God the Father overturned the sentence of death and that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Hope exists because of God's redemptive work in Jesus the Christ.

Pentecost celebrates the empowering of the Church to preach Jesus, to make him known. Pentecost also tells us that in Christ we are one. In Christ, Saint Paul said, there is neither male, female, Greek, Jew, slave or free, we are all one in Christ Jesus. This inclusiveness is symbolized by the story of the foreign tongues. It is further emphasized in the second lesson for today, Paul's First letter to the Corinthians. Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit gives each of us the gifts we need to be Christ to our neighbor. He also tells us that our gifts differ, but that, together, they bring completion to the Church. And, he reminds us that even though different, we are one body in Christ, because there is one Lord, one faith one baptism, one God and Father of us all. This is a most important message for us to hear, to read, mark learn and inwardly digest, that we are called to unity in Jesus Christ. In that unity and only in that unity are we free to be ourselves and to know Christ and make him known. *Amen.*