

The Day of Pentecost 2017

“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of Truth.” (St. John 14.16)

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Today is the fiftieth day after Easter – the Day of Pentecost. It was the day when all that we have just heard in the Epistle took place: “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to Jesus’ apostles and disciples tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (languages), as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

On that wonderful, mysterious day so many, many years ago, God the Holy Trinity made Himself known in a powerful way to those disciples, and to many others who were in Jerusalem for the Jewish Harvest Festival. Suddenly – not on any human cue or schedule – there was a sound from Heaven. The Lord initiated His visit according to His timing, and it was “suddenly” – “all of a sudden”. Then, He demonstrated His power by causing a mighty wind to blow into that place where the disciples were, and, as the Scripture says, “it filled all the house”. Not just the front room and the kitchen, but the whole building. Then – the most mysterious and awesome thing happened – flames of fire appeared and rested over each one – not burning their hair or skin, but resting over them. And then, these disciples began to speak in languages they did not know. They spoke in tongues they had never studied; with words the Holy Spirit gave them. But amazingly, their words were understood by the Jewish pilgrims who were in Jerusalem for the Harvest Festival. These pilgrims represented 16 different regions or countries, and they all heard their own language being spoken that day.

And what was being said? The pilgrims exclaimed this: “We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God!” They were praising the Lord; and, by His inspiration, they worshipped Him intensely as they never had before. They magnified and praised the majesty and faithfulness, the holiness and almighty power, the beauty and greatness of the Living God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And all of this occurred in fulfillment of what Jesus had told His disciples: “I will

pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth.”

It is important to note that Jesus said, “another Comforter”. He said that because He was their first Comforter. The Greek word is actually “Parakletos” which is better translated “Advocate”. And, “Advocate” is the title given for Jesus, as written by St. John. You know it well as one of the Comfortable Words: “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins”. The first Advocate was the only-begotten Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. The other Advocate Who descended with signs of great power on the Day of Pentecost was the Holy Spirit.

Of all the titles given to the Spirit – Comforter, Helper, Counsellor, Spirit of Truth – ‘Advocate’ is often missed. It means, literally, “from close-beside” and “make a call”. “Para” means “close beside” and “kaleo” means “to make a call”. Put together, ‘Parakletos’ means properly, a legal advocate who makes the right judgment-call because they are close enough to the situation. We might think of the Spirit’s work then as advising and counselling us, as well as comforting us. He comes to our side to help us. We should also add His work of strengthening and sanctifying us. The role of strengthening actually flows from the root of Comforter. ‘Forte’ means ‘strong’ in French; so Co-forter...co-Strengthener.

All of these meanings point to one crucial thing – one key understanding and belief – which is that the Lord God Almighty, Who created the heavens and the earth, and every aspect of this universe, cares about us, His creatures. Not only does He care about us, He has come to live in us. He has stooped down; and, mysteriously through His Spirit, He has come with His Truth and Grace; with His Love and Peace; with His Fire and Power; with His Mercy and Hope; with His Wisdom and Holiness; and with His New and Everlasting Life, He has come to you and me.

Why? Why has God Almighty come to us? So that we may keep His words and commandments. Jesus says that over and over again in this morning’s Gospel. “If a man love Me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him”. The Lord wants to make His abode (dwelling) with us. He wants to come alongside us and live in us. Why? Because we cannot do it on our own. We are small and the powers against us are

deceptive and destructive. But He is almighty and everlasting. He has conquered the grave and all the forces of death and hell; and He wants us to have this new and everlasting victory – this eternal Hope. But if we try to live according to our own words, we will die. We will be consumed by our selfishness and greed. So we need to have His Word as our standard. We must seek and do His holy will. And the Spirit of Truth – our other Advocate – has come to teach us, and bring God's Word to our minds and memories. As Jesus said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you".

And now unto God Almighty: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be ascribed all majesty, power, honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.