



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*St Peter's Basilica
Sunday, 19 May 2024*

[Multimedia]

The account of Pentecost (cf. *Acts* 2:1-11) shows us two areas of the Holy Spirit's working in the Church: *in us* and *in mission*, with two characteristics: *power* and *gentleness*.

The Spirit's work in us is powerful, as symbolized by the signs of wind and fire, which are often associated with God's power in the Bible (cf. *Ex* 19:16-19). Without such power we would never be able to defeat evil on our own, nor overcome the "desires of the flesh" that Saint Paul refers to, those drives of the soul: "impurity, idolatry, dissension, and envy" (cf. *Gal* 5:19-21). They can be overcome with the Spirit who gives us the power to do so, for he enters into our hearts that are "parched, stiff and cold" (cf. Sequence *Veni Sancte Spiritus*). These drives spoil our relationships with others and divide our communities, yet the Spirit enters into our hearts and heals everything.

Jesus too shows us this when, prompted by the Spirit, he withdraws for forty days and is tempted in the desert (cf. *Mt.* 4:1-11). During that time his humanity also grows, is strengthened and prepared for mission.

At the same time, the Paraclete's working in us is also *gentle*: powerful and gentle. The wind and the fire do not destroy or reduce to ashes whatever they touch: the one fills the house where the disciples are, and the other rests gently, in the form of flames, on the head of each. This gentleness, too, is a feature of God's way of acting, one that we frequently encounter in the Scriptures.

It is reassuring to see how the same sturdy, calloused hand that first breaks up the clods of our passions, then gently, after planting the seeds of virtue, “waters” them and “tends” them (cf. *Sequence*). He lovingly protects these virtues, so that they can grow stronger and so that, after the toil of combatting evil, we may taste the sweetness of mercy and communion with God. The Spirit is like this: powerful, giving us the power to overcome, and also gentle. We speak about the *anointing* of the Spirit, the Spirit anoints us for he is with us. As a beautiful prayer of the early Church says: “Let your gentleness, O Lord, and the fruits of your love, abide with me” (*Odes of Solomon*, 14:6).

The Holy Spirit, who descended upon the disciples and remained at their side, that is, as the “*Paraclete*”, transformed their hearts and instilled in them “a serene courage which impelled them to pass on to others their experience of Jesus and the hope which motivated them” (SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 24). Peter and John would later testify before the Sanhedrin, after being told “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (*Acts* 4:18): “We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard” (v. 20). And they possessed the power of the Holy Spirit to speak of these things.

This is also true of us, who received the Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation. From the “Upper Room” of this Basilica, like the Apostles, we too are being sent forth, particularly at the present time, to proclaim the Gospel to all. We are sent into the world “not only geographically but also beyond the frontiers of race and religion, for a truly universal mission” (*Redemptoris Missio*, 25). Thanks to the Spirit, we can and must do this with his own *power* and *gentleness*.

With the same power: that is, not with arrogance and impositions – a Christian is not arrogant, for his or her power is something else, it is the power of the Spirit – nor with calculation and cunning, but with the energy born of fidelity to the truth that the Spirit teaches us in our hearts and causes to grow within us. Consequently, we surrender to the Spirit, not to worldly power. We tirelessly proclaim peace to those who desire war, proclaim forgiveness to those who seek revenge, we proclaim welcome and solidarity to those who bar their doors and erect barriers, we proclaim life to those who choose death, we proclaim respect to those who love to humiliate, insult and reject, we proclaim fidelity to those who would sever every bond, thereby confusing freedom with a bleak and empty individualism. Nor are we intimidated by hardship, derision or opposition, which, today as always, are never lacking in the apostolate (cf. *Acts* 4:1-31).

At the same time that we act with this power, our proclamation seeks to be *gentle*, welcoming to everyone. Let us not forget this: everyone, everyone, everyone. Let us not forget the parable of those who were invited to the feast but did not want to go: “Go therefore to the streets and bring everyone, everyone, everyone, both the bad and the good, everyone” (cf. *Mt* 22:9-10). The Spirit grants us the power to go forth and call everyone with gentleness, he grants us the gentleness to welcome everyone.

All of us, brothers and sisters, are in great need of hope, which is not optimism; no, it is something else. We need hope. Hope is depicted as an anchor, there at the shore, and in clinging to its rope, we move toward hope. We need hope, we need to lift our gaze to horizons of peace, fraternity, justice and solidarity. This alone is the way of life, there is no other. Naturally, it is not always easy; indeed, there are times that the path is winding and uphill. Yet we know that we are not alone, we have the certainty that, by the help of the Holy Spirit and by his gifts, we can walk together and make that path more and more inviting for others as well.

Brothers and sisters, let us renew our faith in the presence of the Comforter, who is at our side, and continue to pray:

Come, Creator Spirit, enlighten our minds,
fill our hearts with your grace, guide our steps,
grant your peace to our world. Amen.