

**Whitsunday 2021**

***And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.***

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.  
Amen.**

**For the past several weeks, our Gospel lessons have been foretelling the great feast we celebrate today: The arrival of the Holy Ghost. In the Book of Acts, Saint Luke tells us that it takes place while they are all together in one place celebrating the Jewish feast of Booths, better known to us as Pentecost.**

**Try as we may, there is really no way to accurately describe what is taking place. Luke does his best with phrases such as “rushing mighty wind” and “tongues of fire”, but understand, this is an otherworldly event; a supernatural occurrence that defies any rational explanation. The spiritual outpouring manifests itself in the language of all those assembled. Regardless of their nationality, the various languages all made sense. There were no barriers. It is also at this time that much of what our Lord Jesus had told them, begins to make sense. We might say, their eyes were opened.**

**But what a journey it has been. Those closest to our Lord, Peter, James, and John, had been by his side night and day for three years and even they had not fully understood.**

**Think back to the Last Supper. Jesus tells them in very plain language that he is going to die and foretells the events that would follow his death, yet both Peter and Thomas ask, “Where are you going?” Later that same night in the Garden of Gethsemane, our Lord makes one, simple request, “Stay with me and pray with me.” What do they do? Fall asleep. Not once, but three times. And when the crowd arrives to arrest him, their reaction is complete surprise. Did they not remember anything?**

**And the surprises keep on coming. Even after his death, their first thought at the empty tomb was, “Someone has stolen his body.” Having listened to Jesus’s predictions for three years, they still don’t understand. Until now!**

**As the wind rushes through the house and the fire lights atop their heads, the blinders are removed. All of the previous promises of Jesus are not only remembered, but begin to make sense. In the blink of an eye, they go from being totally confused to being totally gifted with Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Strength, Knowledge, Truth,**

**and Godly Fear. Seven gifts which have continued to empower the Church to this day.**

**Today, on this Pentecost, this “Whitsunday” we commemorate the Spirit’s arrival and the Birth of the Church.**

**During the past few weeks, my homilies have briefly touched on the coming of the Holy Spirit and the role he would play after Our Lord’s Ascension.**

**We hear about the Spirit from Saints Luke, John, and Paul. But he wasn’t created simply to fulfill the promise of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has always existed. He is first introduced to us in the Old Testament in the Book of Genesis at the creation of the world.**

**I think the separate personality of the Holy Spirit is often a more disputed question. After all, He is just that, “a Spirit.” Again, referring to a previous homily, we can picture God the Father and God the Son in the form and likeness of men. But what is our image of the Holy Spirit? Is He truly a person? Well, yes. Certainly He is. Saint Paul speaks plainly of the Spirit as a person and not merely an influence. Paul says, “The Spirit himself makes intercession for us.”**

**Notice, “Himself” not “itself.”**

Each of the “Big Three” feasts as I like to refer to them, that is Ascension Day, Pentecost, and Trinity Sunday, play a pivotal role in our formation as Christians. On this Sunday of The Arrival of God’s Spirit, I ask you to remember two important spiritual purposes: FIRST, His arrival is evidence of Our Lord’s promise not to leave us orphaned, and SECOND, we examine just exactly what role the Holy Spirit plays in our own lives.

Jesus was very much aware that we couldn’t go it alone. His death made it possible for us to “eventually” have life beyond this world, but what would happen in the meantime? In other words, how were we to “redeem” the time until His return?

Well, here is where The Spirit comes in. And who better to lead and guide us in a world He created?

Think about all of the things we take for granted: the sky, the seas, all of the beauty of nature; every blade of grass or speck of dirt, He created. Better put, wherever there is beauty, order, and truth, He is responsible. Every work or thought that you may have, comes from Him.

At the moment of your Baptism, when that water touched your head, you were fully gifted by Him with those same gifts received by the

**disciples on that first Pentecost. That is, you were fully gifted for ministry.**

**In the alternate Epistle appointed for this morning on page 182 of the Prayer Book, Paul sums it up in one sentence. In writing to the Church at Corinth he says, “The Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”**

**Just as those first disciples were given gifts to spread the Gospel, we too have been gifted with the same. In fact, the Church has existed since then because of man’s effort, empowered by the Spirit.**

**With that in mind, we must ask the question, “What is my role in this world? How can I best use the gifts I have been given to further the Kingdom of God?”**

**I think we start by remembering that just as there are Seven Virtues that we are to imitate, likewise, there are Seven Deadly Sins we are to avoid. Most any Christian knows that the deadliest Sin is Pride. In fact, all sins begin with Pride. But the second deadliest is the sin of Sloth, that is, Spiritual Laziness.**

**If we stop to think about all of the effort we put into worldly pursuits and compare that to spiritual pursuits, it is shameful.**

**If you can think way back to your Confirmation, as the Bishop laid hands on you, he prayed that the Holy Spirit would daily increase in you more and more. If we believe that, are we using that increase to further the Kingdom, or, are we slipping further and further into sloth, or spiritual laziness?**

**Truly, the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. But thanks be to God we have the ability to do all things by virtue of Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Strength, Knowledge, and Fear, gifts the Prayer Book reminds grow day by day.**

**And so, on this Pentecost Sunday, let us thank God for the Gift of His Holy Spirit, that we may be enlightened and strengthened for service and continue to have a right judgment in all things.**

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**

**Amen.**