

## **“You Will Be My Witnesses”: Happy Birthday Catholic Church!**

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, one of the great moments in the life of the Church; its birthday. Jesus, filled with concern for the disciples that he had to leave behind, promised “I will not leave you orphans. I will send you the Holy Spirit, the paraclete”. For Jewish community, Pentecost was *‘harvest festival’*. It later reminded Moses’ receiving Lords commandments. But we celebrate, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Mary and Apostles in the ‘cenacle’.

Why Pentecost surprises us always? Connected to all the experiences the disciples went through after the death of Jesus, they were behind closed doors, with great fear that they also could be killed like Jesus by the Jews. Once they received the Holy Spirit, they come down into the people and start preaching the Gospel with great power. It is this apostles’ transformation that amazes us all.

We also have the answer to the question, why they need to receive the Holy Spirit. After receiving the H. Spirit, they did not act according to what they think, but exactly according to what the Spirit told them. We see the active intervention and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the apostles.

Therefore, to receive the Holy Spirit means, ‘a person surrendering himself to the action of the Spirit, instead of his own desire or wish’. At the very outset of Jesus public life, we see this. (Mk.1:12) ‘He was led by the Spirit’. Out of the three events in the upper room, namely- Washing of Feet, Last Supper, Pentecost is the culmination! How *does The Holy Spirit make us new, empower us?* Basically in 3 ways: The Spirit strengthens us in *our relationship with Jesus*, strengthens us in our capacity to *defend faith and to witness faith*.

*'A life owned by God'*, this is what Bible means by 'receiving of the H. Spirit' This brings a new meaning to "my belief in God". When I entrust my life to God, the way he wants to make use of me, He will make the best version of myself for me; this is faith in God. Thus my faith helps me to hope, to believe that God will listen to my prayers and lead me to whatever is good.

Jesus, risen from the dead, is not just a historical figure, nor just a teacher who I admire. Rather, he is a *living presence*. In fact, I do have a friend in Jesus. The most imp. friendship in my life is the friendship with Jesus. This is, how central our relationship must be with Jesus, So the foremost empowering of Holy Spirit is in that relationship, that friendship. Friends, we know that we have already received the Spirit, as we are baptized and confirmed. We have a powerful divine Spirit, who will stand with us always, protecting us. Thus, we are never alone, even at the darkest moment of our life, because *we are "confirmed in the Holy Spirit"*. We know, the church 'exists to evangelize'. This is her existential identity; the reason for her being. When it stops, the church comes to an end. Our task is, with the power of the Holy Spirit, "Knowing the gospel, living the gospel and sharing the gospel".

Friends, Pentecost is the day we once again open our hearts to be *awakened by the fire of the Holy Spirit*. The red, vibrant liturgical color, today reminds us *to allow the Sp. to set our hearts on fire/* like the apostles, so that we may shine brightly as people 'owned by God', people of light; people who live and radiate, with joy and conviction, the gifts of the H. Sp. Today, as Christians, Joy is our mission, Love is our message, and Hope is our witness. 'Come holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful; enkindle in them the fire of your love'. Amen.