

May 28 Pentecost Sunday

Pentecost literally means 50th. It is a feast celebrated on the 50th day after the Passover feast by the Jews and a feast celebrated on the 50th day after the feast of the Resurrection of Jesus by Christians. The Jewish Pentecost was originally a post-harvest thanksgiving feast. Later, the Jews included in it the remembrance of God's Covenants with Noah after the Deluge and with Moses at Mt. Sinai.

On the day of Pentecost: 1) The Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and the Blessed Virgin Mary as tongues of fire. 2) The frightened apostles were transformed into fiery preachers and evangelizers and were given the gift of tongues by a special anointing of the Holy Spirit. 3) The listeners experienced a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit through the apostles' gift of tongues: they heard Peter speaking in their native languages. 4) The early Christians became powerful witnesses and brave martyrs for their Faith in Jesus.

The roles of the Holy Spirit in Christian life are: 1) As an indwelling God, the Holy Spirit makes us His Living Temples (I Cor 3:16). 2) As a strengthening God, He strengthens us in our fight against temptations and in our mission of bearing witness to Christ by our transparent Christian lives. 3) As a sanctifying God, He makes us holy through the Sacraments: a) Through Baptism He makes us children of God and heirs of Heaven. b) Through Confirmation, He makes us temples of God, warriors, and defenders of the Faith. c) Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, He enables us to be reconciled with God by pardoning our sins. d) Through the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, He gives us spiritual nourishment by changing bread and wine into Jesus' Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, through Epiclesis. e) Through the Sacraments of the priesthood (Ordination) and matrimony (Marriage), He makes the Church community holy. 4) As a teaching and guiding God, He clarifies and constantly reminds us of Christ's teachings and guides the Magisterium of the Church in presenting Christ's teachings correctly. 5) As a listening and speaking God, He listens to our prayers, enables us to pray, and speaks to us, mainly through the Bible. 6) As a Giver of gifts, He pours out on us His gifts, fruits, and charisms, thus enriching the Church.

1) We need to permit the Holy Spirit to direct our lives: a) by constantly remembering and appreciating His Holy Presence within us, especially in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation; b) by fortifying ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit against all types of temptations; c) by seeking the assistance of the Holy Spirit in our thoughts, words, and deeds, in the breaking of our evil habits, and in substituting for them habits of Goodness and Love; d) by listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the Bible and through the good counsel of others; e) by fervently praying for the gifts, fruits, and charisms of the Holy Spirit; f) by renewing our lives through the anointing of the Holy Spirit; and g) by living our lives in the Holy Spirit as lives of commitment, of sacrifice, and of joy. We are called to love as Jesus loved, not counting the cost. As Saint Paul exhorts us, “Walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16, 25).

2) We need to cultivate the spirit of forgiveness. The feast of Pentecost offers us the chance to look at the role which forgiveness should play in our dealings with others. Thus, we are challenged to examine our sense of compassion, patience, tolerance, and magnanimity. Learning to forgive is a lifelong task, but the Holy Spirit is with us to make us agents of forgiveness. If we are prepared on this day of Pentecost to receive the Holy Spirit into our lives, we can have confidence that our lives will be marked by the Spirit of forgiveness.

3) We need to observe Pentecost every day. Pentecost is not just one day, but every day. Without breath, there is no life. Without the Spirit, the Church is a field of dry, dead bones. The Venerable Fulton J. Sheen once said about the Church, “Even though we are God’s chosen people, we often behave more like God’s frozen people—frozen in our prayer life, frozen in the way we relate with one another, frozen in the way we celebrate our Faith.” Today is a great day to ask the Holy Spirit to rekindle in us the spirit of new life and enthusiasm, the fire of God’s love. Let us repeat Cardinal Newman’s favorite little prayer, “Come Holy Spirit:”

“Come Holy Spirit; Make our ears to hear; Make our eyes to see; Make our mouths to speak; Make our hearts to seek; Make our hands to reach out; And touch the world with your love. AMEN.”