

Pentecost
6/5/2022

A SECOND EPIPHANY

Last week we celebrated the Ascension of Our Lord. It marked the beginning of a second Advent. The apostles returned to Jerusalem waiting, as instructed by Jesus. Today's celebration is known as Pentecost. The fiftieth day since the resurrection of Jesus and marks the fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit.

Just as the infant Christ was shown forth at Epiphany, at Pentecost the action of the Holy Spirit was shown forth to the world. There are two that God the Father sent; two great gifts to us: The Son and the Holy Spirit. Through the Son, through Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection, God entered into our world in a real and visible way. Through the Holy Spirit, God enters into our world in a real and *invisible* way.

Just as the days leading up to Pentecost could be called a second advent, so too, Pentecost itself is a type of second Epiphany this time showing forth not the Son but the Holy Spirit. This is beautifully described in the first reading as the once timid apostles now go forth and boldly proclaim Jesus to the world. As the Holy Spirit continues to work it is an epiphany that doesn't end.

The gospel takes us back to Holy Thursday where Jesus tells them about the coming of the Holy Spirit. He tells them that the Holy Spirit will teach them everything and remind them of all that he told them. You could say that the Holy Spirit works as the memory of the Church, reminding us of what Jesus said, teaching us so that we can follow together in the way of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is at work, in our lives and in the life of the Church. From baptism onward, the Holy Spirit is at work in us, reminding us of Jesus' words. What holds for individual Christians holds true for the Church as well. We can look at the history of the Church and see marvelous saints, whether canonized or not, and see the Holy Spirit at work. The Holy Spirit is like the wind. You can't see the wind but we all know the wind is real. We feel the wind. We see the effects of the wind in the sails of ships or the leaves of trees. So too, while can't see the Holy Spirit, we can see the effects, the movement of the Holy Spirit.

We can also look at Church history and see many less holy and even downright evil things that have happened and yet even that can be evidence of the Holy Spirit at work; that somehow we survived, that God can even draw good out of evil and that the Holy Spirit can work if not through us, in spite of us. We have to believe that somehow, some way, hopefully with our cooperation, the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and in the life of the Church.

The Holy Spirit comes to unite. In the Holy Spirit we share in a bond of unity and in the Eucharist we share in the bond of unity as well. The Holy Spirit came when the early Church was gathered together. Without the Holy Spirit, the Church is just a worldwide human organization. Without a belief that the Holy Spirit is somehow at work, our faith can collapse.

But the Holy Spirit can work through us but we seek to facilitate that work by opening our hearts to his inspirations, by growing in prayer, not just saying prayers but in real hospitality of heart to God. We do it by reflecting on the Word of God. We do it by worthily sharing the sacramental life of the Church and in living the sacraments we have received, particularly through the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Holy Spirit is at work in the Eucharist we now celebrate and at every Mass.

Our greatest treasure, what we call the Sacrament Most Holy, is the Eucharist where Jesus really and truly gives himself to us under the form of bread and wine. For that reason we go out of our way to show respect to Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. For example, we have a tabernacle, a sanctuary light, with reverence we purify the vessels immediately after Communion and we strive to receive the Communion with reverence and consume it *immediately*.

Last Sunday after Mass someone came back into church with a host that he had found in the parking lot on the ground. Obviously, this was disturbing. Please remember that we always are to receive Communion reverently and to consume the host right away. If you notice someone who does not, please, as gently as possible, tell that person that the host is to be consumed immediately.

I don't want to talk down to people but it is important to review a little about how to receive Communion. When approaching the altar, the proper gesture is a head bow. When you are told, "The Body of Christ," it is important to say, "Amen." That

is your affirmation that Jesus is present in the Eucharist. If you receive Communion on the hand, please raise your hands with one hand underneath the other and make sure your hand is flat, not curved or angled and please try not to grab our fingers. I tell the children making their First Communion that our hands are to be flat like a pancake, not round like an apple.

If you wish to receive on the tongue, after you say, “Amen”, please extend your tongue so you may receive Communion easily. This is one time when it’s not rude to stick out your tongue and it helps us to give you Jesus. Again, this is all about the great gift we receive the Eucharist and appreciating the gift that Jesus makes of himself to us.

The second advent leads to a second Epiphany, an epiphany of the Holy Spirit that continues to this day. May that Holy Spirit lead us with lives of intentional faith through the dangers and sorrows of this life to the life of divine joy, the life of eternal joy.