

# ***The Spirit Gifts Grace***

## **I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS**

### **FIRST READING** (Acts 2:1-11)

#### ***Inside the room***

<sup>1\*</sup> When the time for **Pentecost** was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. <sup>2b</sup> And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind,\* and it filled the entire house in which they were. <sup>3c</sup> Then there appeared to them **tongues as of fire,\*** which parted and came to rest on each one of them. <sup>4d</sup> And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues,\* as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

#### ***Outside the room***

<sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7e</sup> They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup> Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? <sup>9</sup> We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, <sup>11f</sup> both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”

**THE FOCUS: Descent of the holy Spirit**

### **COMMENTARY**

- Pentecost = 50 days after the resurrection
- The reading is divided into two parts:  
First, what happens inside the room  
Second, what happens outside the room
- ***Inside the room*** are the apostles. The holy Spirit comes in the form of a noise (sound) and tongues of fire. Result: the apostles speak in different languages (glossolalia).
- ***Outside the room*** are devout Jews from everywhere. They gather together because of the sound. Their reaction: they were confused, astounded,



amazed. (they heard them speaking in his own language), they asked question: How come these Galileans speak our own language?

- The people mentioned represent the international community at that time. They can be traced in the map in the early Church.

### **REFLECTIONS**

The descent of the holy Spirit coincides with the Jewish Feast of Pentecost (*Feast of Weeks, so called because it falls on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the ceremony of the barley sheaf during Passover. This agricultural feast marks the beginning of the offering of first fruits.*)

It is no wonder that the Jews from all over the world are here in Jerusalem at this time because they are required to attend this feast. Ex 23: 14-17; 34,18-24 require worshippers to appear before Yahweh on the feasts of Unleavened Bread (Passover), Weeks (Pentecost), and In-gathering (Succoth, Tabernacles).

We are familiar with the image of the coming of the holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire coming down and resting on the apostles. This visible sign is a symbol of energy. The apostles are energized for a purpose (mission), just like Jesus when he received the holy Spirit at baptism.

We should also pay attention to the sound, the noise that it produces when it comes down. The image of the strong driving wind producing noise is consistent with the meaning of the Greek word of spirit, *pneuma*, which means wind, spirit, breathe, movement of air, life principle. The holy Spirit can be sensed not only through sight but also through hearing or feeling.

Its presence therefore cannot be ignored.

When you experience its presence, then it is going to take hold of you. You cannot but do some extraordinary things like speaking in tongues (making yourself understood to other people). The ability to communicate the presence of God is a gift of the holy Spirit.

If we are possessed (filled with) by the holy Spirit, we can do \_\_\_\_\_

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34 )

**LORD, SEND OUT YOUR SPIRIT, AND RENEW THE FACE OF THE EARTH. Or ALLELUIA.**

**SECOND READING** (1 Cor 12:2-7,12-13)

*The effect of the holy Spirit*

<sup>2\*</sup> "You know how, when you were pagans, you were constantly attracted and led away to mute idols. <sup>3b</sup>Therefore, I tell you that nobody speaking by the spirit of God says, "Jesus be accursed." And no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the **holy Spirit**.

*Different gifts, but same Spirit*

<sup>4\*</sup> "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same **Spirit**; <sup>5</sup>there are different forms of service but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup>there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup>To each individual the manifestation of the **Spirit** is given for some benefit.

*Different parts, but one body*

<sup>12\*</sup> <sup>8</sup>As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. <sup>13<sup>h</sup></sup>For in one **Spirit** we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of **one Spirit**.

**THE FOCUS: Again the focus is the holy Spirit**

**COMMENTARY**

- Like the First Reading, it talks about the effect of the holy Spirit.
- When one possesses the holy Spirit, he **speaks** properly about Jesus: "Jesus is Lord." One will not curse Him. Right utterance is a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- Paul writes to the once pagan Corinthians who viewed Christ differently when they were still worshipping a mute idol. Notice the word "mute."

This adjective is put in contrast to God who speaks through the holy Spirit. It is in contrast also to the disciples whom the holy Spirit empowers to speak.

- Next, Paul discusses the variety of **gifts**. Christians owe their gifts (charisms) from the holy Spirit. The gifts are enumerated in v. 28 (*Some people, God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues*).

- Paul reminds the Christians in Corinth that the variety of gifts, their giftedness individually should not be a cause for division because they come from the same Spirit. The gift of each individual is not for oneself but for others.

- Besides, no one should discredit anyone because he or she is gifted differently from the others.

- At the same time, the holy Spirit takes away distinctions which cause discrimination.

**REFLECTIONS**

The holy Spirit changes what we utter with our mouths. With the holy Spirit, we affirm that "Jesus, not the mute idols, is Lord."

Maybe we can identify the mute idols of today (*material things, ambitions, prestige, work, ideology, beliefs, etc.*). If we are worshipping these things, we still lack the holy Spirit. The mute idols prevent us from proclaiming "Jesus is Lord." (*This has nothing to do with the JIL Movement of Ed Villanueva*).

The holy Spirit is the source of our giftedness. Our gifts (given free) are for the good of the community. They should not be used to destroy other people or ourselves (by being too proud of them.)

**GOSPEL READING** (Jn 20:19-23)

<sup>19\*</sup> <sup>j</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."<sup>20k</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.<sup>21\*</sup> The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21\*</sup> "[Jesus] said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."<sup>22\*</sup> <sup>m</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "**Receive the holy Spirit.** <sup>23\*</sup> <sup>n</sup>Whose sins

**you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”**

**THE FOCUS: The Action of the holy Spirit**

**COMMENTARY**

- This reading is basically for Easter, but it can be used also for today’s feast.
- We can discuss the holy Spirit in terms of the forgiveness of sins.
- Right after breathing on the apostles the holy Spirit, Jesus says to them “*Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them....*”
- The resurrected Christ sends forth the apostles with the holy Spirit with a mission to forgive.
- Is this the same holy Spirit that the apostles receive on Pentecost? Yes.
- Sometimes we have problems with chronology since these mysteries are written in historical terms, according to the theology of each sacred author.
- The mysteries of resurrection-ascension-pentecost should be seen as one big mystery, interrelated with one another.

**REFLECTIONS**

Jesus, the resurrected Christ, appears to his fearful disciples, with the greeting “Peace be with you.” Jesus wants to convert their fear into peace. One who lives in fear does not live in peace.

Jesus’ mysterious appearance assures the disciples that they are on the right track in their belief and in following Jesus.

Now it is not enough just to follow Jesus; it is their turn to be sent just as Jesus had been sent.

The holy Spirit is their force, energy to go on for mission. This mission is to render forgiveness to those who are open to their preaching.

The Holy Spirit comes. His coming is the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus.

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**II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING**

The First Reading tells about the descent of the Holy Spirit in the forms of sound and fire. The Second Reading tells what the Holy Spirit gives (gifts). The Gospel Reading talks about resurrected Jesus breath-

ing forth the Holy Spirit to the apostles before sending them to forgive.

**How to make your homily**

Begin by telling a story about the charismatic groups or movements. (El Shaddai, Shalom International, etc.). The strength of these group is their outright recognition of the holy Spirit in their lives. They set the mood to experience the coming of the holy Spirit (baptism of the Holy Spirit, slain by the Spirit, prayer warrioring, etc.)

Now tell what the readings say about the holy Spirit. 1) The First Reading tells about the coming of the holy Spirit and its effects on the apostles and the people (*glossolalia*). 2) The Second Reading tells about the different gifts coming from the same Spirit for the benefit of all. 3) The Gospel Reading tells the story of Jesus personally breathing on the disciples the holy Spirit, sending them for the forgiveness of sins.

All Christians receive the holy Spirit. In a way, we Christians are all charismatic. No one monopolizes the possession of the holy Spirit and its variety of gifts. We receive the holy Spirit during our baptism and confirmation.

We let the holy Spirit operate in us with the following results: when we speak, others understand us; we use our talents (*administration, teaching, healing, prophecy, etc*) for the benefit of our community (church), not just our small group; we foster unity among the members; we extend forgiveness to those who have caused us to run for our lives (those who intimidate us).

To end, relate the holy Spirit with the holy eucharist. Whenever we receive the eucharist, we encounter Jesus who breathes the holy Spirit into our minds and hearts and drives us to forgive others. Forgiveness fosters unity. The eucharist is the sacrament of Christian unity. The holy Spirit is truly in us if we accept the present of the Risen Lord in the form of bread and wine. The apostles received the holy Spirit in the place where they took the Last Supper (eucharist). To be a true charismatic is to bind ourselves to the church animated by the holy Spirit.

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**III. OUR CONTEXT**

1. What gifts have you received from the Lord, that you think can be instrumental in the uplifting of the community?
2. Is the Church experiencing a new Pentecost?

