

PENTECOST – A NEW BEGINNING MARKED BY JOY

Fr Michael D’Cunha

We have all attended birthday parties, and surely have also celebrated our own. I recall fondly my birthdays as a kid growing up. The joy of being the only boy in school ‘allowed’ to wear my choice of clothes to school rather than the school uniform was something special. So did the distribution of sweets, going from class to class and being wished by the teachers. But the real fun was the party at home, where all my friends from my building and neighbourhood would come home; there were games, prizes, cutting the birthday cake, snacks and the party favourite – Rasna – without which no party was complete! But the fun really began when I would open the gifts. Invariably, each gift would send me on a new quest of learning and discovery.

Pentecost is celebrated as the birthday of the Church. The Acts of the Apostles describes the event of Pentecost as something that empowered and transformed the disciples. They discovered new abilities and gifts given by the Holy Spirit, and these gifts set them off on new journeys. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples became Jesus to all whom they met. While earlier they would lock themselves up in a room for “fear of the Jews” (Jn 20:19), now they went out and spoke openly and boldly about Jesus to those very same Jews. As they preached about Jesus and His resurrection, Jesus Himself worked through them, supporting their preaching with “signs and wonders” (Acts 14:3). In Jesus’ name, and in imitation of Him, they worked miracles (Acts 3:6). They rejoiced even in their suffering (Acts 5:41), because, in suffering, they imitated their Lord and Master, Jesus, who also suffered. They travelled to distant lands, preaching the Gospel and transforming lives as they went from place to place. But most importantly, the community of believers met together for the breaking of bread (the Eucharist) (Acts 2:46); they were of “one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32), caring for one another in a way that they ensured “no one was in want” (Acts 4:34). But most importantly, their way of life itself was a testimony to Jesus, and the people around recognised in them the transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit, and many joined them (Acts 2:47).

These people were ordinary folk like you and me. None of them would have had a formal education or studied rhetoric. But they were open to the Holy Spirit, sincere in following Jesus, and, as biblical scholars point out, they simply preached the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus – not any well-worded sermons. But their actions spoke louder than their words, their transformed lives bearing testimony to the Spirit of Jesus at work in them. We too are given the same Spirit at Baptism and Confirmation. Like them, we are called to live transformed lives that are marked by prayer (especially the Eucharist), oneness in mind and heart, caring for one another, thus attracting others to Jesus.

QUESTIONS for reflection:

- 1) Pentecost was a life-transforming experience for the disciples. Has the Holy Spirit transformed you? Why or why not?
- 2) Galatians 5:22-23 states, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” At our Baptism and Confirmation, we received the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to bear fruit. Share your life experiences where you have borne one or more of the fruits of the Spirit. Share also, from your own observation/experiences where others in the group have borne the fruit of the Spirit.
- 3) How can you ensure that your community is of “one heart and one mind” and that there is **“no one in want”**?