



Theology Corner

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Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation

“What is Pentecost?”

This weekend, we celebrate Pentecost Sunday. But what is Pentecost? The name comes from the Greek “Πεντηκοστή” (transliterated: Pentekoste), which means “fiftieth.” The significance of this is that it marks the fiftieth day after the Resurrection of Christ. It is for this reason that the date of Pentecost will vary based on what date Easter falls on in a given year, since Easter is a movable feast.

In Acts 1, we read at the Ascension of our Lord., that he told the apostles the Holy Spirit will come upon them. Mary and the apostles prayed continuously for nine days until the Holy Spirit finally came upon them in the upper room giving them the power to preach the Gospel to all nations: which included the gift of tongues as this was a gift given to preach meaningfully to others in their native language. The gift of tongues is considered a *charismatic* grace which means a gift given by God for the sanctification of others. Charismatic graces can be given in an extraordinary way such as the gift of tongues, prophesy, or other miracles. They can also be given in an ordinary way such as papal infallibility, or even the power that a priest is given to consecrate in virtue of their Holy Orders.

There are also “Fruits of the Spirit” such as: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are biblically referred to in the singular “fruit” of the Spirit since they are all ultimately one complete effect when we live in the Spirit. For example, if you live according to the Spirit, you cannot be both unkind and peaceful or faithful and lack self-control – all nine “fruits” are concomitant (naturally accompanying). These were later adapted into a plural usage in order to point out the multiple *aspects* of the one gift. Once the multiple aspects of the gift was emphasized, the Church categorized the gift under twelve aspects eventually adding forbearance, modesty, and chastity to the list of fruits. So, inasmuch as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit given to us as a gift at baptism, we will bear these fruits as a sign of the spirit working within us. This is why it is so important to take into consideration, as we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, that we have received the seed of the Holy Spirit at baptism. This seed, however, needs to be fertilized through the practice of virtue which will enable God to do his work within us so that we will bear fruit.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is, in most cases, not given enough attention. The Holy Spirit is the very source of our new life in Christ. In a trinitarian context, the Spirit is often referred to as the *love* of God as he who eternally proceeds from the divine will. For this reason, when we receive the Holy Spirit, we have the very love of God within us. As we are grafted onto the One Vine, Jesus Christ, his love produces fruits which are necessary for our ongoing sanctification, and ultimately for our salvation. It is by the Holy Spirit, as the love of God present in our soul, that we are able to live in loving union with him here on earth. We are able to draw closer to him through prayerful contemplation, which serves as a prelude to the beatific vision – our life with God in heaven.

Why else is Pentecost important? Because it is a celebration of the birthday of the Church! It was after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit that St. Peter preached his first homily beginning in Acts 2:14 when he asked people to repent of their sins and be baptized. This marked the first action carried out under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, when thousands were converted to the faith and bound together as one in the one and undivided Spirit of God. Pentecost concludes the season of Easter in which we have celebrated the Resurrection of Christ. Let us now celebrate together the coming of the Holy Spirit which unites and sanctifies the Church and with the principle of unity as we are brought into communion with the Holy Trinity.