



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Pentecost Sunday

The Day of Pentecost

Readings: Acts 2: 1-11, Ps 103, Galatians 5: 16-25, John 15: 26-27; 16: 12-15

The older one gets the less, I find, one wants to be reminded of birthdays – unless, of course, you are counting down to the Queen’s telegram. (In fifty years’ time, according to demographics, we will all get one).

Nonetheless we celebrate today’s birthday as peculiarly our own for it is the birthday of the Church. Every sermon will say this and every cliché will be painstakingly rehearsed. We have all done it. So I thought it might help if we looked at this great Feast from a different angle.

The Pentecost, the fiftieth day from the Resurrection, the tenth day after the Ascension of Christ and the apotheosis of Man, has its origins deep in the heart and history of the history of Israel. Perhaps it is appropriate, in this the week of a rather different birthday, of the founding of the modern state of Israel, to look at our origins and why this feast has the significance which it does.

The Feast of the Fiftieth Day (Pentecost in the Greek) refers to the Jewish Feast of Weeks, Shavuot. This comes, unsurprisingly, fifty days after the Feast of the Unleavened Bread or Passover and was celebrated, originally as a Harvest offering in which the 'first fruits' were brought and offered.

The fiftieth day, students of significant numbers will have worked out, comes after the end of the seven weeks or 49 days. Seven is the number of mystical completeness and the sevens of the seven days brings us to the new day, the fiftieth, in which a new era dawns, the divine work being complete and the gifts of God being manifest in fruitfulness and offered back to Him for His service in thanksgiving.

You will understand from this that God's choice of the Day of Pentecost for the revelation of the outpouring of His gifts by the Holy Spirit and the dawning of a new age is not coincidence. The New Testament is hidden in the Old. The Old Testament is revealed in the New. They are the Word of God which has become incarnate in Christ Jesus and given to His people for the conversion of the world.

For us, members of His Church, part of His universal body, we celebrate at every Mass the new and eternal Passover which is the covenant in His Blood. We can do this because, in the crucifixion Christ has embraced our death with the Blood of the Lamb. In the Resurrection Christ has overcome the final enemy of Man and opened the way to reconciliation with the Father. In the Ascension Christ has lifted our humanity into eternity and divinity. In the Pentecost He has sent us the Presencer, the revealer of God, the advocate and the empowerer.

The mystical puzzle is complete. We do not need to solve it but simply be thankful beneficiaries and participants in this the greatest Opus Dei, the Work of God.

By the power of the Holy Spirit God enlightens and enlivens His Church. Pray regularly for openness to the divine life.

By His divine breath He gives power to speak His Word. Pray for a love of His word, to study it and share it with others.

By His divine light He gives wisdom to understand it in the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church. Be clear about what the Church teaches under His inspiration. If you don't know then ask. We are not marketing our threadbare opinions but the rich tapestry of God's benevolent wisdom for Man.

His unseen but sensible Presence we invoke at the altar and in the sacramental life to manifest the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of the Lamb of God.

Remember you are praying the Presence with the priest, standing with Mary at the Calvary and swept up in the worship of the universal Church, one foot on earth, the other in Heaven.

By His divine fire He purifies His Church and energises His people. He gives us the gifts to do His will and return, again and again, with the first fruits of that offering.

Be regular in confession, He longs to love us into shape with the fire of His love. If you've lost the glow, seek the company of those who are on fire. It will rekindle. Be generous with your time for God and for others and with the many gifts that He has given you.

This is at the heart of the events of that Pentecost in the Cenacle in Jerusalem. We are given to understand our history in the chosen people of God and our mission in the world. God's saving work is complete. We have now to take it to the nations and to our neighbour.

Pentecost may be the birthday of the Church but our task, witness the response of the disciples, is to invite everyone to the party.

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