

Theme: "The Christian Church is a Divine Institution"

Text: Acts 2:1-21

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who has brought us together". Amen

Our text for meditation is from the second reading of today Acts 2:1-20. Let us pray: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." Amen

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My friends in Christ; in the Gospel of today Jesus said to the disciples: "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning". This Helper that Jesus mentions came to the disciples with power on the Day of Pentecost. It is the day that God chose to send the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, and establish His Church.

The Holy Spirit who comes as our Helper and Teacher point us away from ourselves and to Christ. And make His name known; that we depend on His name, not ours; and His work, not ours. For when the devil comes accusing, pointing out our sin and rebellion and the filthy name we have made for ourselves before God (which we cannot deny!) - The Holy Spirit comforts us by pointing us to Christ and His cross. To teach us that, yes, God sees what we have done! *That's why He is there on the cross* to do something about it. Not to *accuse* us, but to *save* us from our sin. To take it away from us, put it all upon Himself and die in our place. And this is the message of comfort that the Christian Church proclaims since the Day of Pentecost.

God always knows how to choose the right time to do His mighty works. Our text says that "<sup>2</sup> When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." The disciples were speaking in the languages of the people who had come to Jerusalem. What does happen if I speak to you the following? "**Me alegra mucho estar con ustedes en este día y poder predicarles la Palabra de Dios.**" As you heard I spoke to you in Spanish and most of you did not understand what I said. In order that you understand I have to translate it from Spanish to English. What I said was: "**I am so happy to be here this day and proclaim to you the Word of God.**"

In our text of today, the people did not need a translator; they heard the disciples to speak in their own tongues. Sometimes we wonder why in our times these mighty miracles do not happen anymore. As we are gathered here today for divine service, the sanctuary is not filled with a loud, rushing wind. Nor are there tongues of fire dancing atop the heads of anyone here. We do not have wind

and fire like they did at that first New Testament Pentecost. And this is not a big mystery - why? When something big happens in the Lord's plan of salvation, He does it with something special. At the crucifixion; there is darkness, earthquake and a torn curtain in the temple. At the Resurrection; saints are raised from the dead and testify.

At the first Pentecost, there is a mighty rushing wind and fire. We do not have wind and fire. But what do we have? For one thing, we have what the truly Christian Church teach: the Word of God. We have the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Good News that He has died to take away our sins. We do not have any living apostles, but we do have their apostolic teachings in the New Testament; we have the Word of God. It was this same message that St. Peter proclaimed to the crowds that day; the same message that saved 3,000 that day is the one that is proclaimed at the Christian Church.

In the Day of Pentecost God gathered the crowds and they heard the first preaching of the Church of the New Testament. Everyone was given the opportunity to see and hear the wonderful works of God. We read in our text the preaching of Peter filled with power from above. We are greatly impressed by the clarity and power of that preaching. We are also impressed by the wonderful skill that the Holy Spirit gave to Peter to enact God's truths.

Peter proclaimed the prophecies of the Old Testament that the Jews knew very well. In addition, the sermon condemned directly those who were guilty of crucifying the Son of God. The apostles did not hide or conceal the truth that they killed Christ, but this sermon also contained the offer of forgiveness; that God had raised Jesus from the dead as David had foretold. To this Jesus whom they had crucified, God had made Him both Lord and Christ.

This powerful sermon made its effect. Luke writes in v. 37 that the people said: "Brothers, what shall we do?"<sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Peter said that they need to repent and cling to the offer of salvation that Christ gives on the cross and he called them to be baptized for the remission of their sins. We hear that some mock the apostles, but Peter preached to the crowd and declared that this Pentecost miracle is a fulfillment of prophecy in Joel.

In our text there is another thing which is very important, which is proof that God chose a great day to send the Holy Spirit upon his disciples. It says that there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. This makes sense, because Pentecost was a major festival, and any devout Jew who could was supposed to come to Jerusalem for worship. Who came to Jerusalem? According to the text devout Jews. This meant that these were men who were well-schooled in the Old Testament. They had been taught throughout their lives about the Word of God. They had been thoroughly taught the Law of God, and they had been well-schooled in God's promises of the Messiah. In fact, from the Old Testament, they knew everything about the Savior except for one thing: His Name.

When Peter preaches his Pentecost sermon, what does he do? He tells them the Savior's name. He declares that the Savior they have been taught about, the Messiah for whom they have been waiting, has come. He declares to them that Jesus, whom they crucified, has died to take away their sins. For these devout men waiting for the Messiah, Peter fills in the last piece of the puzzle. Quoting from the Old Testament again and again, he proclaims that Jesus is long-expected Savior, and He has accomplished their salvation.

Many of them returned to their countries and became ambassadors of Christ. Now, they are missionaries in their own land. The First Pentecost was the right time for our God to establish the Church and help it in its growth. These people returned to their own land and they contributed to the work of the Christian Church in the world, because when the apostles later came to these lands, they found believers in Christ.

The mission of the Church was set before her on the day of Pentecost when the disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, burst forth from the house to proclaim Christ crucified, that there is no other name under heaven by which men must be saved. The mission of the Church is before us for this is the Church of God because the marks of the Church are here. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed in its purity and the sacraments are being administered to God's people according to Christ's institution. And all that is done so that you might not fall into despair but have hope, have that sure and certain hope of the resurrection to life everlasting in heaven.

We are the people of God, the new Israel. We are a people who were once dead, no better than dried up bones laying on the desert floor as the first reading of today says. We are a people who have life and salvation breathed into us by the Holy Spirit. We are the new Israel by baptism, and pray to God that He will keep us alive in Him unto the end.

My fellow redeemed, troubles will follow us around all the days of our life but hopelessness need not follow too. We have hope in the One who the Holy Spirit testifies to, in Jesus Christ. If the Lord of the Church could flesh out those dry old bones that our first reading mentions and then give them life, just think of what He can do for His Church; just think what He can do for His people. Just think of what He can do for us. Just keep breathing in the Word and Sacraments.

So as we celebrate the Festival of Pentecost, we are celebrating not just an historical event – we celebrate the Lord's work now . . . in **us**, and in **His Church**, and in **the world** today. His work which never fails. His work which does not tell us about how to get along in this world, but which tells us about another world. A world that is beyond anything that we can experience here and now. A world that was here before I was born, and will exist after I die. A world which will continue when all other worlds are destroyed. That you and I may live in that world, the kingdom of Heaven, is why the Father sent His Son, and why the Son sent us the Holy Spirit.

For the work of the Spirit is to lead us to the Son, and the Son takes us to the Father. And this God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three in one and one in three, is here and working for us. Here to take away our sin. Here that we may live. Here, that we may get to Heaven not by building a way there ourselves, but by being in and remaining in His building; His Church; in His body; in Christ. Amen

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord, and Savior. Amen.