

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST / WHITSUNDAY

Text: St. John 14:23-31

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Do you wish to hear God the FATHER's voice? Listen to JESUS. Do you wish to see the FATHER's face? Look to JESUS. Do you wish to know the love of the FATHER? Then look to JESUS. Do you wish to know the will of the FATHER? Then listen to JESUS who is the Face, Word, Wisdom, Compassion, and Power of God the FATHER enfleshed in God the SON. JESUS is the Divine Icon of the FATHER in human flesh. But to know either FATHER or SON, one must listen to the SPIRIT who proceeds from the FATHER and the SON and speaks not Words of His own, but only that which the FATHER and the SON give Him to speak.

The Word the HOLY SPIRIT speaks is the same Word which drew you here to receive the gifts of God this day. It is the same Word that brings you to your knees crying out, "*LORD have mercy, CHRIST have mercy, LORD have mercy,*" and it is the same Word that opens your eyes to see, your ears to hear, and your hearts to believe CHRIST JESUS' merciful reply in His blessed Words of absolution: "*I forgive you all your sins.*" That is the reason we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, for today we commemorate the day when God the FATHER sent God, the HOLY SPIRIT, in the Name of JESUS, who is God, the SON, and from whom the HOLY SPIRIT also proceeds.

Today, we celebrate the breaking down of the walls of separation, for the curse of Babel is no more; it is undone, for in CHRIST, there is no division. "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in CHRIST JESUS.*" Gone, therefore, are the distinctions of color or culture. Gone are the distinctions of race, language, or class, man or woman, adult or child, for we are all one in CHRIST. You are "*...one body and one SPIRIT, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one LORD, one faith, one Baptism.*"

With the coming of the HOLY SPIRIT, all that has separated the Creator from His created is now removed—the veil of our weak human reason torn asunder. The wall separating us from God and each other is torn down. Not one stone is left standing upon another. For we are made one in the Stone rejected, the Stone who is our Foundation and our Cornerstone—CHRIST JESUS. The many are made one with tongues no longer confused but set free to confess with the HOLY SPIRIT with one voice, that JESUS CHRIST is LORD of all.

No longer are the people of God scattered because of their arrogance and rebellion. By the grace of God the FATHER through God the HOLY SPIRIT they are reunited in one Body by one common confession, which can only be found in the one language of faith in CHRIST JESUS, where God's people are made one in JESUS for the glory of God and for service and love of their neighbor.

Today, you hear of your God who has made of you a people for Himself—a royal priesthood, a holy nation. Forged in the fires of the HOLY SPIRIT and cleansed in the Holy Blood of His precious SON, you are tried and strengthened, being made ready to run with joy and endurance the race God has set out before you. With the purifying fires of Holy Scripture, God’s HOLY SPIRIT calls you, who are God’s holy people, with God’s holy Word. For it is with the Word of God that you are sanctified, that is made holy, through the speaking of the HOLY SPIRIT, for the sake of God’s SON. This is God’s gift to you.

This gift comes to you through the Comforter, the Helper, the Counselor; the HOLY SPIRIT who proceeds forth from the FATHER and the SON and with the FATHER and the SON together is worshiped and glorified. This is He who spoke through the Prophets, Apostles, and Disciples God’s holy Word of truth to create faith in the hearts of God’s people where none existed before. He was sent forth from the FATHER and the SON for just such a purpose; to *“teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that [CHRIST JESUS] said to you.”*

Thus, it is the HOLY SPIRIT that gives voice to your confession of JESUS CHRIST. For this confession is a language which your hearts do not know of themselves. This confession comes in words that your tongue cannot, by itself express. For we cannot of our own reason or strength believe in JESUS CHRIST or come to Him, or confess Him as our LORD and SAVIOR. That must come by the teaching of the HOLY SPIRIT who comes with Words not His own, but the Words of the FATHER from whom He proceeds, and of the SON who sent Him. These are Words which animate your soul, waking it from the sleep of sin and death giving it life. These are the Words which animate your tongue, teaching it the language of faith, that you may make confession of the faith that lies within you.

The one voice which speaks with the language of faith confesses each LORD’s Day that you are by nature sinful and unclean, sinning against God by all that you have done and left undone, in thought, word, and deed. With a holy *“Amen!”* that one voice then receives from God His grace and love in His gracious Word of absolution. With one faith and one heart the voice of the *“one holy catholic and apostolic Church”* receives what God, the HOLY SPIRIT speaks into you—His gift of love and grace in the message that JESUS, His only begotten SON, was given to die for you, and for His sake, you are forgiven all your sins.

Hearing and believing this Word, you receive that peace which JESUS promised to leave with you, that you might come to a blessed end with your heart and soul untroubled by fears of Satan, death, or grave. In response, that one voice sings as one Body in CHRIST with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven praising God and acknowledging Him to be the LORD.

So it is, that the Church is born of the Word—the eternal Word of God. It is not created and cannot be improved by the plans and schemes of men. No passion or heartfelt emotion of man could have given birth to the Body of CHRIST. Nor could any passion or heartfelt emotion of man cause it to flourish and grow. It was born of the Word of God and is sustained by the

life-giving, faith-creating, utterance of His HOLY SPIRIT. It is by this Word that we live, and breathe, and have our being. It is this Word, breathed by the FATHER, enfleshed in the SON, and brought to our remembrance by the HOLY SPIRIT, that we are to believe, teach, and confess and no other.

For men seek signs and wonders, but none will be given them but the sign of the New and Greater Jonah who lay dead three days in the heart of the earth and on the third day rose from the tomb, having conquered death and the devil, and freeing us from the bonds of sin.

Therefore, the Apostle, St. Paul, would declare that His message would be JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified, nothing more, but nothing less. It is this Word, and nothing more, but nothing less, that converts the hearts of men from dead works to serve the living God.

Thus, the true Church, the Bride of CHRIST, has loved Her Husband, clinging to Him; and keeping His Words in Her heart, she has pondered them and confessed them. For that is what JESUS' meant when He said, *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word."*

Therefore, JESUS and the FATHER have loved Her, and cared for Her, and made their home with Her. Through the Church, God the FATHER has revealed to the world, God, His SON, by the speaking and teaching of God, the HOLY SPIRIT. God has shown His love for His creation through His Holy Bride, the Church, who speaks not Her own words, nor the words of men, but the Words given her by her LORD to speak.

This speaking was not meant for the apostolic age alone; it is meant to be declared to every man and woman of every age until the day of CHRIST's return. Therefore, the SPIRIT of God has opened the mouths of the faithful to declare His SON to the four corners of the earth, sending them forth to *"make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY SPIRIT"* and *"teaching them to observe all things which [JESUS] has commanded."*

Therefore, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, I take not of what is mine and declare it to you *"for I received from the LORD that which I also deliver to you."* I have been given to declare to you *"that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."*

Through the preaching and teaching of the Word you receive faith, and with this faith, you receive what JESUS has to give to you—forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. For Jesus has said, *"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!"* and *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My FATHER will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."*

Remember, you *"keep"* JESUS' Word, not in the sense of obeying a command, but in the sense of keeping His Words in your heart, pondering them, and confessing them, and God the FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT take up residence in your heart. Through that same Word, the HOLY SPIRIT gives to you the Words of faith in JESUS to speak back to God, and when you

cannot find the Words He, Himself, prays for you, interceding *“with groanings that cannot be uttered.”*

Yet, JESUS’ Word is not only delivered to the ears, it is poured over you in the bloody waters of Holy Baptism where you received the white garment of CHRIST’s righteousness which covers your sinfulness with the purity of JESUS. The SPIRIT also delivers JESUS’ life and salvation into you with JESUS’ very Body and Blood, the same Body and Blood sacrificed on Calvary and delivered into your mouth in, with, and under the simple elements of bread and wine in the LORD’s Supper, and the Church, as one Body, drinks from the one Cup.

With the incredible mysteries of JESUS’ true Body and Blood, given and shed for you and joined to the humble elements of bread and wine; with the washing of regeneration where you are made a child of God through water and Word, the HOLY SPIRIT cleanses and purifies your body and mouth for service to CHRIST, forgiving your sins while strengthening, nourishing, and sustaining your faith, that you may bear up under the weight of suffering in this life for the sake of CHRIST.

So why do we celebrate a feast this day? What is its importance? This is the day that we celebrate the coming of the HOLY SPIRIT to put the Word of God on our lips and the language of salvation in our hearts. This day we celebrate the birth of the Church. This is the day the HOLY SPIRIT has opened our ears to hear JESUS and in our hearing believe Him when He says, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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