

## HOMILY PENTECOST YEAR B

(Acts 2:1-11; Gal 5:16-25; Jn 15:26-27; 16:12-15)

\*\*\*\*\*

Some kids were burying their pet cat that had died. One of them said that they should say a prayer first. Another said that his dad was a minister and he knew how to pray and proceeded to say, “In the name of the Father, and the Son, and into the hole he goes!”

What is the very best gift that you have ever received? As great as it might be, it pales in comparison to the greatest gift of all, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Live by the Spirit, in the Kingdom of God.

That is the message that St. Paul shares with us in the second reading. Twice he exhorts us to “live by the Spirit”, assuring us that those who do so will live in the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is the focus of most of Jesus’ preaching. For Jesus, that kingdom is the peace, joy and right relationship of the Holy Spirit. It is a share in the relationship that he has with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In the gospel Jesus speaks about giving us the Spirit that he receives from the Father. The gift of that Spirit makes the kingdom a budding present reality for those who live by that Spirit, who are experiencing the power of the Spirit at work in their lives.

Perhaps a couple of simple stories might illustrate, Linda Yamniuk is a mother of seven children. They took turns every night making bread in the bread maker, for the next morning. One time her daughter forgot to put in the yeast, and the bread was only a few inches in height. The kids were amazed at the difference that yeast makes in bread making, and Linda was quick to point out that the bread without yeast, is very much like our lives without the Spirit of God. We need God’s spirit to make us rise, grow, and live lives to the full.

She also shares a time when her son was at an age where he consistently got his clothes dirty every time he went out to play, no matter how often she admonished him. One time, he came back with green grass stains on the knees of his jeans, and gave them to her to clean. She was just too tired to scrub them, so just washed them and hung them out to dry. To her amazement, when she brought them in, the sun had bleached the green right out of the jeans. She was instantly reminded of the power of the Spirit to work in our lives, through faith and prayer, and shared that with her son as a lesson in life and faith.

As a worshipping community today, we are privileged to celebrate the feast of Pentecost – the feast of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles – the feast of the birthday of the Church. The second reading reminds us that the Spirit is given to the Church to help us initiate the Kingdom of God here on earth – what an awesome challenge!

The Spirit will give us the power to be transformed ourselves, and then to transform the world. But the power of the Holy Spirit is a special kind of power, a surprising kind of power, the power of God. That power is the power of powerlessness, vulnerability, attraction – the power of a child to melt the hardest heart. The Greek word for that kind of power is “exousia”. That is the power of God that in the end is the greatest power of all – the power of love, of relationship, of intimacy with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

When the apostles received the Holy Spirit, they spoke in tongues. We also are to speak in tongues, in a new language, the language of love, of forgiveness, of acceptance and of blessing. Parents need to bless their kids; and kids need to bless one another. It is the language of understanding, forgiveness and affirmation that will change the world. The Christopher Leadership course uses that kind of language – constant affirmation.

The Holy Spirit will also transform our behaviour. In the second reading St. Paul lists the actions that we must let go of (fornication, impurity, drunkenness) and the constructive behaviour and attitudes that we will take on (love, joy, peace, faithfulness).

A young couple in The Pas shared with me their experience of living by the Spirit in the Kingdom of God. He had just been initiated into the third degree as a Knights of Columbus. It was a life changing experience for him, one he was struggling to put into words as we chatted on the steps of the cathedral. His wife quietly shared that he did not have to say anything. She could tell by looking at him that he had been deeply transformed, and besides, she had gone through what he went through, right there at home with the kids. Such was their unity, oneness, love. Truly, this is one couple who are living by the Spirit in the Kingdom of God.

The Eucharist we celebrate now is a tremendous gift of faith; we share in the body and blood of Jesus himself, through the power of the Spirit, and the prayer of the Church. Then we are sent out to share that love with all we meet.

So, like this young couple, live by the Spirit in the kingdom of God.