

Experiencing the Holy Spirit

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (688)

The Church, a communion living in the faith of the apostles which she transmits, is the place where we know the Holy Spirit:

- in the Scriptures he inspired
- in the Tradition, to which the Church Fathers are always timely witnesses
- in the Church's Magisterium, which he assists
- in the sacramental liturgy, through its words and symbols, in which the Holy Spirit puts us into communion with Christ
- in prayer, wherein he intercedes for us;
- in the charisms and ministries by which the Church is built up
- in the signs of apostolic and missionary life
- in the witness of saints through whom he manifests his holiness and continues the work of salvation.

Pentecost Sunday



The day of Pentecost ushered in a new era of salvation history. With the Holy Spirit descending upon the apostles and others, the Church as we know it was born. From this point forward, we get to witness a profound spiritual awakening take place in the lives of Christ's disciples. After Jesus ascended into heaven, his promise of sending an Advocate to guide and protect his Church is maintained. We hear in this Sunday's first reading:

*When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled,
they were all in one place together.
And suddenly there came from the sky
a noise like a strong driving wind,
and it filled the entire house in which they were.
Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
which parted and came to rest on each one of
them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in different tongues,
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.*

This was not the first time something miraculous took place during a spiritual gathering of the apostles. The Spirit has a tendency to be active in such settings. We get to experience the life-changing energy of the Holy Spirit when we gather for meetings and share a common hope, rooted in the faith of our savior, Jesus Christ.

Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith, founders of modern twelve-step recovery, were certainly touched by the Holy Spirit and guided by others. In 1940, Bill was 5 years sober but fighting depression and accused of being a “dry drunk” by his peers. One day a man knocked on his door.

“I’m Father Ed Dowling from St. Louis. A Jesuit friend and I have been struck by the similarity of the AA Twelve Steps and the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius” (as recorded in the book *The Soul of Sponsorship* by Robert Fitzgerald, S.J.). This began a friendship that formed the spiritual development of twelve-step principles and began overlaying them with Catholic spirituality. We return to our roots and the life of the early Church when we gather to pray, share openly and honestly with each other, and celebrate our risen Lord through the sacraments.

Much like those gathered at the Feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit first descended upon them, we come from different backgrounds and are united in the new life offered by God’s mercy. In a way, we speak a united language of recovery and can understand each other’s tragedies and triumphs without having to say too much.

The second chapter of Acts continues:

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his native language?"

Let us share boldly the Good News of our Lord and let the Holy Spirit guide our recovery. We pray that God awakens us to those He may send as companions and fellow disciples along the way. We join our brothers and sisters around the world this Sunday to celebrate Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that is alive in us today.