

## Pentecost - B

Before we dive into the readings for today, it seems like a good idea to recall the passage from the first reading that immediately precedes the one for today.

It's about the selection of a replacement for Judas Iscariot so that the number of the apostles would be restored to 12.

That's important because "The Twelve" as they are often referred to in the New Testament, served the function, among others, of being the patriarchs of the New Israel.

Unfortunately, many of the images from Christian art referring to Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit, can be misinterpreted to mean that Pentecost was something only The Twelve experienced.

The preceding verses can help because they refer to the entire community of Jesus' followers in Jerusalem, and Luke says that number was at least 120, that that was just counting the men.

It could very well be that it was this group that was assembled on the day of Pentecost, which would give the outpouring of the Holy Spirit a much larger dimension.

It also helps to cover the comment that the disciples were heard speaking in so many languages, and could be heard everywhere in the large crowd that had gathered.

Perhaps they had mingled among the people gathered there and were speaking to them individually in the hearer's own tongue.

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Repainting the picture with these details can help us take a fresh approach the experience, and find other aspects to reflect on.

One that stands out for me is how prodigious God was in sending the Holy Spirit upon all the disciples who had been with Jesus. The Twelve had their role as the apostles and the “patriarchs” of the New Israel, but God intended for all who came to belief in his Son to be recipients of the gift he had in store for them from the creation of the world: God was inviting all who believed to share in the life of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And that happens because the Holy Spirit being poured into the hearts of the faithful.

This is a much more profound relationship than what many people are looking for in their life of faith.

For many, faith in Jesus has more to do with becoming friends with him—a good thing, to be sure, but our common understanding of friendship does not include the sort of mutual indwelling that happens in the midst of the Trinity.

Even if we are lucky enough to have friends who know us so well they can finish our sentences, or seem to have an uncanny knack of calling just at the right time, or making the right gesture, none of us would assume that our friends are sharing in our lives so deeply as to be on the inside of them with us.

That mutual indwelling is reserved for the case when we are being welcomed into the life of the Trinity, where

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God knows us better than we know ourselves, and as one spiritual writer put it, is closer to us than our own jugular vein.

To be initiated into that experience of intimacy with God by “tongues as of fire” means to me that all those so gifted couldn’t help but go out and proclaim to any and everyone the God’s mighty and unprecedented acts.

Differences in language couldn’t begin to stop that sort of enthusiastic communication.

You got any mighty acts of God that need to be proclaimed? Anybody holding back on sharing the good news of what God has done for them?

If so, it would be good to ask yourself what that’s about. It’s pretty clear from today’s first reading that those first recipients of God’s greatest gift could not have not spoken out. The experience was too strong to sit on.

The same Spirit is present in the Church today. I hope it’s not the case that we have found ways to keep the Spirit in check—for the sake of our own need for control, perhaps, or because we are too self-conscious and prone to embarrassment.

If you are holding back, try not to. Try to let God in more so that you can be let in to God more. That’s the whole point and has been from the beginning.

“Come, Holy Spirit, kindle in us the fire of your love, so that we can know the fulfillment of the promises of God!”

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1. Recall the passage from Acts immediately preceding today's: the selection of the replacement of Judas.

“The Twelve” replace Jacob’s sons as the patriarchs of the New Israel.

A favorite representation in Christian art for the Pentecost event.

A misinterpretation?

2. Preceding verses refer to 120 (just the men!) who were there to discern Judas’ replacement

Was that the group assembled on Pentecost? If so, a much larger event!

Repaint the picture with these details and other aspects come to the fore:

- Prodigious act on God’s part; the Holy Spirit descends on all who believed in his Son
- Completes a work God had in process from the creation of the world
  - Think about it: How could people receive the Holy Spirit except that they had the capacity to. The capacity was there from the beginning
- God was inviting all creation into the life of the Trinity; that happens because the H.S. is being poured into the hearts of all the faithful

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3. A much more profound relationship than friendship with Jesus

Friendship with Jesus a good thing, yes, but friendship does not include this sort of mutual indwelling

4. Even if we are lucky enough to have friends who can finish our sentences, none of us assumes that they are on the inside of our lives with us.

Mutual indwelling reserved for what God does in the Trinity, invites us into

God is closer to us than our own jugular vein.

5. Initiation into that experience of intimacy with God by “tongues of fire” means the disciples so gifted couldn’t help but go out and proclaim God’s mighty and unprecedented acts.

Differences in language could not begin to stop that sort of enthusiastic communication!

6. You got any mighty acts of God that need to be proclaimed? Anybody holding back?

If so, what’s that about?

First recipients could not not have spoken out. What keeps us from doing so?

Our need for control?

Too self-conscious and prone to embarrassment?

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7. If you are holding back, try not to. Try to let God in more, so that you can be let into God more.

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