

***Pentecost Sunday (C)***  
***May 24, 2015***

*Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him (Jn. 14:23).*

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost with joy and thanksgiving. The seven weeks of Easter have come to an end and Christ our Lord's *Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given and communicated as a divine person: of his fullness, Christ, our Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 731)*. The gift of the Holy Spirit begun at Pentecost never ceases and the fruits of the Holy Spirit's gift are manifested in the holy lives of Christians. The gift of the Holy Spirit also *causes the world to enter into the 'last days', the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 732)*. What this means practically is that there exists a state of tension, to put it mildly, between the Kingdom of Christ and the world. Our Lord Himself spoke of this tension to the Apostles at the Last Supper: *'If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you....Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master' (Jn. 15:18-20)*. Perhaps this statistic that I recently came upon may help us to understand Our Lord's words. There are in the Church some 17,000 formally canonized Saints and Blesseds. The number of Christians who have been martyred for the Faith however, is 45,000,000; many of these martyred during the twentieth century and in our own days.

*When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf (Jn. 15:26)*. St Hilary, one of the early Church's great theologians explains that *we receive the Spirit of truth so that we can know the things of God* ("On the Trinity" in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. II, p. 999). To know the things of God is to know the truth about everything; not necessarily the *how* of things, as for example, in *how* the world came to be but the *why* of things. To understand the purpose of any given thing is ultimately more important because this enables us to judge and use it wisely and more importantly, to understand ourselves in view of our ultimate purpose; both in relation to God and in relation to one another. Today's great Feast clearly reveals to us that we were created for glory; to share in God's own life through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is our ultimate purpose. Living in view of this ultimate purpose with determination and purpose puts us on a collision course with the world: hence the persecution we experience.

In the absence of an ultimate purpose, things and even people can be viewed in isolation and this perspective is very easily prone to abuse. This is why the preaching of the Gospel is almost always met with opposition and even violence. Authentically preached and received, the Gospel always brings about a conversion, a change from darkness to light, from vice to virtue. For this reason, at the forefront of our minds and hearts we keep the words of our Lord: *In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (Jn. 16:33)*. The world is becoming increasingly more intolerant and even violent in the face of Christian truth. In discussions and debates that concern the meaning and purpose of human life, human sexuality and truth itself, there is little or no tolerance for the moral absolutes that we have received from God Himself. Our own society has been tilted

forcibly from virtue to vice and it seems that there is little room for the Spirit of truth promised by our Lord.

We must nevertheless do what others have done before us and speak the truth in love (Cf. *Eph.* 4:15); mindful of our Lord's consoling words: *Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom* (*Lk.* 12:32). We must redeem our culture. Our age is no different from others in the sense that discipleship is always first and foremost, a personal endeavour. Though the gift of the Holy Spirit is offered to everyone who believes, *it is given to each man in proportion to his readiness to receive it.* ("On the Trinity" in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. II, p. 999). We must also be very careful to recognise our own cultural conditioning and be on guard against conceding too much to the neo-pagan culture around us. These words from the Second Epistle of St. John are very relevant to our present circumstances not only in the world but in the Church as well: *Anyone who is so progressive that he does not remain rooted in the teaching of Christ does not possess God; while anyone who abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son* (1:9). It is all too easy to doubt the power of grace in our lives and to give in to the prevailing spirit of our age. If the early Christians had clung to the moral standards and outlook of their times they would never have converted pagan Rome. Like them we must stand outside the culture of death and bring to it the life-saving message of the Gospel.

Christian discipleship is not easy, evidently, but it is meaningful and purposeful. For each one of us, our Lady, Mary the Mother of Jesus is a model of faithful discipleship and of humble cooperation with the work of the Holy Spirit. As she was one in prayer with Apostles and the Lord's disciples awaiting the gift of the Holy Spirit (Cf. *Acts* 1:14), she is one with us who today celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Church of God, to which we by His grace belong, in her whole being and in all her members is the sacrament of the mission of Christ our Lord and of the Holy Spirit. In all humility we pray that the Holy Spirit who at Pentecost began the teaching of the Gospel, may continue to work in our world through the hearts of all of us who believe.