



CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

May 24, 2015

Pentecost Sunday

Gospel reading John 20:19-23 *[To be read aloud]*

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."

Brief commentary:

The gift of the risen Lord Jesus Christ is none other than "the Gift that contains every gift," the Holy Spirit. The Jewish feast of Pentecost (fifty) or Shavuot (weeks) marks the time following Passover when the Hebrew slaves, whom the Lord freed through Moses, received the gift of the Covenant and the Law on Mount Sinai. These events of divine liberation, covenant and law for guiding their lives, are considered the events that gave birth to the people Israel as a people chosen by God to be a blessing and light to the nations. The book of the Acts of the Apostles tells us the story of how the Passover of the Lord Jesus (his suffering, death and resurrection), his institution of the "new and everlasting covenant" in his body and blood, and the gift of his life-giving Spirit on Pentecost, were the events that gave birth to the new reality of 'ekklesia' (the Church) and her saving mission to the world. In today's gospel of John we also find another example of how the Holy Spirit is the gift of the risen Lord to his disciples. Like God had "breathed" into Adam so that the human being became "a living being," so now Jesus breathes his Spirit upon his disciples that they may share in the life of God and be empowered for the mission of reconciliation and grace. (In both the Hebrew and the Greek, the word for spirit is also the word used for breath and wind. Though we cannot see the wind/breath/spirit we experience its presence and effects in our lives and in our world.) At the same time, Jesus invites us to "receive the Spirit," to say "yes" to the Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and in each of her members is the source of all-good, of all grace, of all power, of all gifts and *charisms* for the service of others and for the mission of the Church in the world. That the Church is born by, lives by and is led by, the Holy Spirit, assures us that the Church is not simply a social service institution or a human organization, it is first and foremost the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Church is the work of God solely for God's saving purpose on behalf of each of her members and of the whole human race. The Church continues to be renewed in her identity and mission, inspired by the Holy Spirit, through her many 'Pentecosts' throughout her history and throughout the world. *Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in us the fire of your love! Amen!*

Today's reading offers significant messages:

- The Passover of the Lord Jesus, his institution of the new covenant, and the gift of the Holy Spirit are the divine events that gave birth – and continues renewing – to the Church of Jesus Christ.
- The Church experiences and teaches that Holy Spirit leads us to conversion, allows us to hear the voice of the Father, makes us adopted children of God who can call God "Abba" (Father), awakens faith in us, reveals Jesus to us, is God's living saving grace in our lives, leads the Church and guides her into all truth, intercedes on our behalf and is our Advocate, makes the sacraments efficacious signs of God's grace, enables us to follow Jesus Christ and live his Gospel, spiritually equips us for mission.
- "Receiving the Spirit" means saying "yes" to God in faith, hope and love. In turn, the Spirit empowers us for apostolic mission in the Church and in the world.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

- Do I ask the Holy Spirit to lead and guide me?
- Do I see and experience the work of the Spirit in my life, in the Church, in my parish, in my family and world? Do I seek to discern the work and voice of the Spirit of God in my life?
- How am I responding to the Holy Spirit, and how am I putting the Spirit's gifts into practice in my life and in my participation in the life, ministries, and mission of the Church?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 687-747