

Pentecost homily - 2018

What struck me first when I read these readings was that the apostles **‘began to speak’**.

The Gospel reading tells us that the apostles were afraid after the crucifixion of Jesus, because they suddenly felt that the society, which crucified Jesus, was against them as well, because they were His faithful followers. We read ‘the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were for fear of the Jews.’ So they didn’t speak about Jesus, their mouths were shut, they were hiding behind closed doors. It sounds a bit like the way we Catholics are today, we are afraid of letting people know that we believe in Jesus and most of the time we gather behind closed doors, and keep quiet in the open air.

But all these changes when Jesus sends the Holy Spirit upon the apostles at Pentecost. Their mouths open up and they speak, not only in their own language, but in different tongues, and they glorify God, so that the same society, which they feared may hear what a wonderful loving and merciful God we have.

What a change! How? The answer is obvious, because we read in the Acts of the Apostles that they were filled completely with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They didn’t just receive the Holy Spirit as the Gospel reading says, but they were filled with Him completely, and so the only thing they could do is speak about the wonders the Lord has done, as it says in the Acts.

Can you also have such a fullness of the gifts of the Spirit? You may think you are not worthy or you have doubts about yourself or you are afraid what happens if the Holy Spirit fills you?

Well, once you have unwrapped the gifts of the Holy Spirit that you carry in you, you will be almost addicted to using them, because it is enjoyable and energising both for you and for others when you use them. This is how I personally experience the Holy Spirit sometimes when I sing or sometimes when I write my homilies, and sometimes when I encourage people.

It is a bit like if you have the gift of playing music, say the piano, both you will really enjoy it and also those who hear your music.

So how do we unpack the gifts? At last Tuesday’s Gift course at St. Columba’s the DVD talk was excellent, I really enjoyed it, so I would like

to summarise what we were told by the presenter who was obviously full of the Holy Spirit herself.

She basically said that unpacking means removing everything that is in the way of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is bursting to fill us with His gifts, but there can be serious blockages there in our hearts that stop His gifts to flood us, eg. deep seated anger against someone, unforgiveness from the past, hate not just against others but sometimes against self, etc.

Step 1: Remove any stubbornness and self-justification and honestly acknowledge any sin, but always remember that God looks at you with merciful and loving eyes, like a parent. So don't worry He will not tell you off for any sins.

Step 2: Remove any distraction and basically turn towards God: let God and not your ego be the focus of your attention. This is what we traditionally we call as conversion of mind and heart.

Step 3: Remove the locks from the door of your heart and open your heart to God: invite him into your heart to help you change.

Step 4: Remove any pride and say sorry to God. Now it is important that confession is basically a sacred form of renewing your commitment to God. The **renewal of this commitment** is absolutely important, because for example in 1967 before the Holy Spirit powerfully came upon the students of Duquesne University in the US, they did exactly the same: they renewed their commitment to the Lord Jesus by saying: Lord Jesus we commit ourselves to you, and want to follow you even if we have to suffer for it. At that moment they felt as if a new sense of peace and joy flooded their hearts. This was the beginning of the most profound outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon members of the Catholic Church in modern times and has ever since affected over 200 million people and it is still spreading. So renewal of commitment is absolutely essential in any relationship, but especially in our relationship with God, in difficult times.

For the above four or five steps you don't need clever words, but only FAITH, even just a faith like mustard seed, and just speak from the heart. The Lord understands what you want to say and will respond in the best possible way. Then just wait patiently and trustingly for the Holy Spirit to come, and when he comes you will have no problem with opening your mouth!