

PENTECOST SUNDAY, C

VENI, SANCTE SPIRITUS – COME, HOLY SPIRIT

“I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My Name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you” (Jn. 14: 26)

What Makes This Pentecost Different: This year’s Pentecost Sunday is very special for us in this country. It coincides with the Platinum Jubilee celebration of our Queen, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the throne. The first to ever spend 70 years on the throne in the history of the exalted English Monarchy. The activities marking the Jubilee with all the holidays and exciting packages are well-deserved in all its ramifications. The Queen is an embodiment of royalty, humility, gentleness, humaneness, equanimity, and deep faith in God. She is a rare royalty who combines her authority with compassion; her affluence with modesty; and one who conducts her affairs with honour. She is the embodiment of the Crown of the Commonwealth, which reflects our shared diversity and unity. The Commonwealth is a body of nations, peoples and races bonded by a common history of being under the British rule at one epoch or another in their national history. The sustenance of this body under the leadership of the Queen for these decades testify to the innate and astute competence of the Queen. Today, by the grace of God, we celebrate the life of a woman, a wife, a mother, grandmother, Queen, and Head of the Commonwealth of Nations; we celebrate a life blessed by God and lived in gratitude; a life of grace and comfort; a life of faith and surrender. A life so regal and gentle. Let us raise our glasses and toast to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of her other realms and territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith. *Salutat Regina! Ad multos annos!*

Pentecost As A Day of Fulfilment: Today, fifty days after the Resurrection, ten days after the Ascension, we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost, in which the liturgy has us relive the birth of the Church, according to what St Luke narrates in the First Reading (Acts 2: 1-11). the Holy Spirit descended on the community of disciples, who “had all met in one room” where they, in one accord, devoted themselves to prayer. With them was Mary, the Mother of Jesus (cf. Acts 1: 14; 2: 1). We can therefore say that the Church had its solemn beginning with the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecost event, which was characterised by a “powerful wind” and “tongues of fire” manifested in the ability to “speak foreign

languages” so that every man from “every nation under heaven” could hear and understand, was an event that manifests the faithfulness of God because it marked the fulfilment of a promise made by God in Joel 2: 28ff, and by Jesus to His disciples as we read from the Gospel (Jn. 14: 15-16, 23-26). “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments; and I will ask the Father and He will give you another to be your Advocate, who will be with you forever” (Jn. 14: 15-16). “I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you” (Jn. 14: 18) “From now on the Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My Name will teach you all things and remind you of all I have told you” (Jn. 14: 26). The day of Pentecost was when this promise repeated at different times and in various ways came to pass. Some Bibles translate Acts 2: 1 to read; “When the day of Pentecost was fulfilled” (NABRE) giving emphasis on the fact that it was not one of those eventful days, but a day set aside by divine plan to fulfil a promise. It must be noted that the Pentecost is not synonymous with the descent of the Holy Spirit because it existed before this time. In the Old Testament it was the Agricultural festival of the Jews celebrated fifty days after the Passover. It is called Harvest Festival which was an annual event (cf. Ex. 23: 16, Lev.23: 15-22, Deut.16: 9-12). The book of Exodus commands the Israelites to celebrate it, while the book of Leviticus and Deuteronomy spelt out how and when it should be celebrated. It attracted people from different parts of the world. The city of London has this feel, as the nation marks the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. The Pentecost, with the gift of tongues was a reverse of the event of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11). For in the Babel story, the gift of tongues made understanding impossible, thus it was intended to confuse the people. In the Pentecost narrative, the gift of tongues made communication possible.

The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the Advocate, also called the Comforter, the Consoler, the Helper, the Paraclete, the Counsellor, taken from its Greek etymology (parakletos) means *one who positions himself alongside, to support and to comfort*. The Holy Spirit is the power-giver, the courage-filler, the healer, love-giver, and giver of every good gift. He is symbolized in tongues of flame, in the dove, in the oil, the wind, in the breath, in the colour red and manifested in different tongues. He is the Spirit who gives wisdom and understanding, counsel and fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. When received, He produces enormous fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5: 22-23). The Holy Spirit, as intended by Christ was to be a Companion, One who was to be with the Apostles, nay the Church, for ever (Jn14: 16). With the Spirit’s

presence in and with the Church, “the gates of the underworld cannot prevail against it” (Matt. 16: 18). He was to teach all that they needed to know. In this sense, the Holy Spirit continues to teach and to reveal things anew to the Church so that her mission continues to be alive and active responding meaningfully to the “signs of the time.” Christ intended the Holy Spirit to constantly remind the Apostles “all that I have taught you.” There were so much that Jesus said that the evangelists did not write down as St. John affirms (Jn. 21: 25). Thus, God gives us the Holy Spirit to whisper the forgotten and the lost into the ears of the Church so that she can communicate the truth of the gospel in unadulterated and unalloyed veracity. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the manifestation of the indwelling and abiding presence of God in us. “Neither the Father alone whom no one has seen, nor the Son who made Himself known, can enter into communion with human beings without the medium of the Holy Spirit” (The New Community Bible Commentary on Jn 14: 15-31).

The Presence of the Holy Spirit Among Us: The Holy Spirit, who blows where he wills, is present among us and in us in diverse ways. At Baptism, we received the Holy Spirit into our lives, and at the Sacrament of Confirmation. He communicates His being to us through all the sacraments of the Church. He is present in us when invite the Holy Spirit into our lives. St. Paul tells us in the Second Reading (Rom. 8: 8-17) tells us that the Holy Spirit has already made His home in us, and thus guides us to seek the spiritual over the unspiritual desires of the flesh. The Holy Spirit makes us God’s children, able to call Him “Abba, Father.” We are no longer slaves but heirs of the kingdom. The Holy Spirit enkindles the fire of God’s love in us, which enables us to love God with all our might, mind, and soul; and to love our neighbours as (our ourselves) Christ loves us. The Holy Spirit fortifies us against temptations and helps us to pray. St. Paul affirms thus: “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans” (Rom. 8: 26-27). The Holy Spirit unites us even as He spreads different gifts to us for the growth of the Church. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, unity, and peace, who brings joy into our lives and community.

Dear friends, as we celebrate the gift of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in our lives, Church, families, community and in our world, we must be conscious of the fact that the holy Spirit does not and will never compel us to do that which we do not freely dispose ourselves to do. It therefore becomes our duty to be open to loving peaceful coexistence so that our fragile and polarised humanity may experience that bond of love that the Holy Spirit has poured in our midst.

Once again, we congratulate our Queen and Mother of our nation, Queen Elizabeth II as she marks 70 years on the throne of English monarchy.

Long live the Queen!

God bless the Queen!!

May peace reign in our world!!!