

## PENTECOST SUNDAY – YEAR A

Acts 2:1-11; 1Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23

*Excerpts of Pope Francis - Angelus– 28 MAY 2023*

by Father Charles Fillion

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Brothers and sisters, the Gospel takes us back to the Upper Room, where the apostles had taken refuge after the death of Jesus. We already know the scene. It's the evening of Passover, and the Risen One presents himself precisely into that situation of fear and anguish and, breathing on them, says: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (v. 22). With the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus wishes to free the disciples from fear, from this fear that keeps them holed up at home, and he frees them so that they may be able to go out and become witnesses and bearers of the Gospel. This is what the Holy Spirit does: he *frees from fear*. The disciples had closed the doors.

The Gospel says, "for fear" (v. 19). Fear of what? The death of Jesus had shocked them. Their dreams had been shattered; their hopes had vanished. And they had closed themselves inside. Not only in that room, but within, in the heart. How often do we too shut ourselves in? How often, because of some difficult situation, because of some personal or family problem, because of the suffering that marks us or the evil we breathe around us. We risk slipping slowly into loss of hope and lack the courage to go on. This happens many times. And then, like the apostles, we shut ourselves in, barricading ourselves in the labyrinth of worries.

Brothers and sisters, this "shutting ourselves in" happens when, in the most difficult situations, we **allow** fear to take the upper hand and let its stern voice prevail within us. When fear enters, we close ourselves off. The cause, therefore, is fear: fear of not being able to cope, of having to face everyday battles alone, of risking and then being disappointed, of making the wrong choices. Fear blocks, fear paralyzes. And it also isolates: fear of others, of foreigners, of those who are different, who think in another way. And there can likewise be the fear of God: that he will punish me, that he will be angry with me...

Some will probably say, is there still people thinking like that? Yes, there are people who has not encountered the real Jesus, the Risen one. If we give space to these false fears, the doors will remain closed: the doors of the heart, the doors of society, and even the doors of the Church! Where there is fear, there is closure. And this is no good.

However, the Gospel offers us the remedy of the Risen One: the Holy Spirit. He frees us from the prisons of fear. When they receive the Holy Spirit, the apostles come out of the Upper Room and go out into the world to forgive sins and to proclaim the good news.

Thanks to him, fears are overcome and doors open. Because this is what the Holy Spirit does: he makes us feel God's closeness. His love casts out fear, illuminates the way, consoles, sustains in adversity. Faced with fears and closure, let us invoke the Holy Spirit for us, for the Church and for the whole world.

Let a new Pentecost cast out the fears that assail us and revive the flame of God's love. May this Eucharist give us the strength and courage, to ask the Holy Spirit, to intercede for us, and open our hearts more to the gifts that he wants to give. Yes, the Holy Spirit not only *frees us from fear, but help us to be witnesses and to proclaim the Gospel, not only by word but also by our actions.*