

Pentecost Sunday
June 8-9, 2019

Heal our wounds, our strength renew

Readings: Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13; John 14:15-16, 23-26

Early this past Thursday we were privileged to witness the events commemorating the 75th anniversary of D-Day, June 6, 1944. We recalled the heroism of men who rightly make up what is called “the greatest generation” some of whom were present, sitting right behind the dignitaries, now well into their 90’s.

These soldiers came together from disparate backgrounds, educational levels, and political persuasions. They set aside these differences in order to work for the common good of our nation, doing so heroically. On D-Day alone, more than 2500 American soldiers lost their lives. You’ve heard the stories and try to imagine the emotions of those who were deployed in the amphibious landing crafts approaching the shores of Omaha Beach.

Whenever I am tempted to complain about anything, I ought to pause and consider such historical events. Whatever challenges our local church has faced, I pause to consider the power of people pulling together in pursuit of a common purpose.

We were privileged to listen this morning to the ancient Pentecost Sequence sung by our Choir. Five such Sequences remain in the Sacred Liturgy.¹ Most Sequence Hymns were written in the Middle Ages and were sung just before the Gospel as the clergy processed to the place of Gospel, which was often in the middle of the nave, in the days long before microphones existed, so people could hear.

The Pentecost Sequence is entitled the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*. It likely was written either by Pope Innocent III (d. 1216 A.D.) or Stephen Langdon, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1228 A.D.).

¹ Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Our Lady of Sorrows and All Souls Day

Written in Latin verse, it follows a repeatable pattern of rhymes and syllables, often lost in translation without some adjustments. Widely regarded as one of the masterpieces of sacred Latin poetry, the hymn follows a pattern. Lines 1 & 2 always rhyme, while the third line of every verse ends in “ium”.² I repeat a few lines:

Come, Holy Spirit, come!
And from your celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine!
But three following lines really stood out to me...

Where you are not, we have naught,
Nothing good in deed or thought,
Nothing free from taint of ill.

Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour your dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:

The solemnity of Pentecost is about much more than the ending of the Easter season. That is true from liturgical point of view, but from the spiritual point of view the significance of this solemnity is much deeper. Pentecost speaks for renewal in the church, and as such, is a particularly significant feast today.

It is exceedingly important to invoke the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we seek to move forward in faith and trust in the Church today. This will only happen however, if we listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of the church. The Lord desires renewal in his Church. But this is completely dependent upon our willingness to listen and to work together.

² Msgr. Charles Pope 15 May 2016, Archdiocese of Washington website

To this end, I am delighted that Archbishop Hebda made an announcement last night at the Church of St. Peter in Mendota, the oldest in the Archdiocese....older than ours by **one year!**³ He announced that the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis will embark upon what could be up to a two-year process for the convening of an Archdiocesan Synod. Provisions for such a diocesan meeting are contained in the Code of Canon Law.

Suffice it to say, it is a process of mutual discernment, as we gathered people of God listens to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, as that prompting is often mediated by means of others. While it will have a very practical component, namely proposals and plans, added score it seems to me that it is a mutual process of healing and walk in together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Is there any doubt that we can pull together in faith to work for the common good of the Archdiocesan community? I pray that we will work together to revitalize, reshape, and recommit ourselves to the perennial truths that our Catholic faith offers to us.

In an increasingly secularized society, the church can be a voice of reason, of compassion, and yes, a voice proclaiming the truth of Christ in love. It must remain that voice, whether or not it is popular. We must continue to live our Catholic life , without counting the cost.

Generations ago, our nation pulled together in time of great challenge for humanity, working together for something much greater than themselves. I believe that today, we must respond to the great challenges of our day in our Church. May this be a positive step in that process, always guided by the Holy Spirit.

³ The Church of St. Peter, established in 1840, was administered by Fr. Lucien Galtier, who also founded the Chapel of St. Paul, later our Cathedral, a year later on 1 Nov. 1841.

Introduction to the Feast of Pentecost

Fifty days have now passed since we celebrated the great feast of Triumph and resurrection, the solemnity of Easter. The ancient Jews first celebrated this feast, commemorating the first fruits of the Spring harvest, fifty days after Passover.

This feast always has been a feast of joy and gratitude for the magnificent power of the Lord manifest in so many ways. Today, as Christians, we recall God's gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Let us pause to acknowledge our failings, confident that Christ who has conquered sin, will free us from ours.