



Pentecost Sunday

May 27, 2007

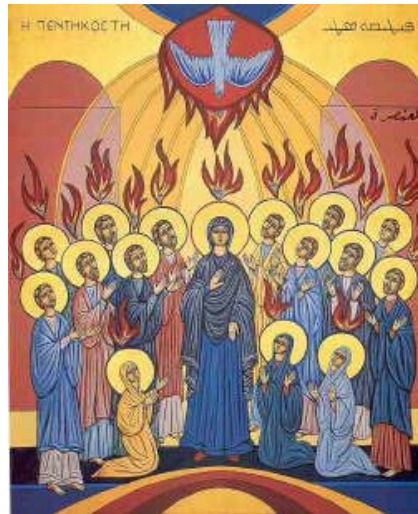
Homily by Fr. Jon Pedigo

[Acts 2:1-11](#)

[1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13](#)

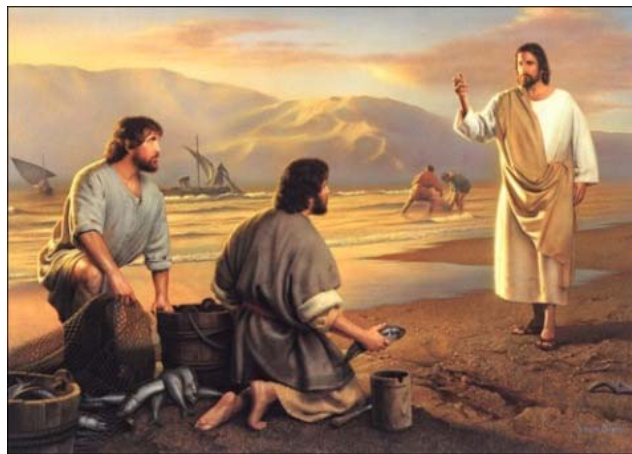
[Jn 20:19-23](#)

PENTECOST celebrates the BEGINNING of a COLLECTIVE EFFORT to bring about a CHANGE in the world. We accept the GIFT of the SPIRIT that has been given to the community. Today we acknowledge the power of the Spirit as it transforms us as individuals and collectively as a PARISH community.



The Holy Spirit transforms communities. Today's Gospel takes us to the disciples after the Resurrection. The disciples are hiding in the upper room consumed by fear for their own personal survival, hoping that the WORST would pass, and that they could just get on with their lives. We are not dissimilar from the disciples.

The Holy Spirit can and will transform our unwillingness to let go of our fears. The Holy Spirit will dispel our fear of the unfamiliar so that we can offer hospitality to the stranger. Our suspicion of the stranger will fade away as we come to know the stranger's story and soon the stranger becomes friend. Our friendship becomes stronger and more "real" and before long, we break bread with each other, no longer strangers, but friends.



The first step in transformation is possible because Jesus, **RISEN FROM THE TOMB**, moves our hearts from fear to love. In the Gospel passage Jesus gave the fearful disciples the **CHARGE** to **FORGIVE** the sins of their oppressors. The Disciples had been given the freedom to choose one of two paths: The Path of the Fear or the Path of Reconciliation. The Path of Fear would keep the disciples locked up in an isolated room where their fears would echo around and around in their heads until they would come to the inevitable conclusion that the only way out of fear would be to destroy the enemy. The Path of Fear, therefore, leads to mutual destruction.



Jesus offers the second path: the Path of Reconciliation. Like NEO in the movie the MATRIX, the Path that NEO took eventually led to TRUTH. Progressing through the MATRIX TRILOGY (with the exception of the totally unnecessary rave scene), NEO learns that the only way to avoid the destruction of humanity is through the renunciation of self and a free will sacrifice of love. In Christ's Path of Reconciliation, the beginning of the journey is the Cross. In Christ's path there is no promise of self-preservation, only the Cross that reconciles the Sinner to God. The World – meaning all human societies – is then consecrated in Truth through the Cross. Truth is revealed when we see one another as friend, not enemy and thus, the Path of Reconciliation ends in PEACE.

In these times, we find that the Path that has been chosen for us is The Path of Fear. It is the Path of HIDING IN BOMB SHELTERS with the sounding of the civil air patrol siren, shivering UNDER SCHOOL TABLES in duck and cover drills, or

running to the hardware store purchasing duct tape and plastic sheets. The Path of Fear reminds us that **WE SHOULD BE AFRAID.**



Christ offers us the Path of Reconciliation, the alternate **PATH**. In the Path of Reconciliation there is **NO FEAR** because we have **FORGIVEN** the **SINNER**. We have **CHOSEN** to **FORGIVE** and in doing so, we have chosen to **LOVE** and by our **DECISION** to **LOVE**, we have **BROKEN** the circle of **VIOLENCE**.

In Acts, we have evidence that the Disciples made the decision to love. Because they have chosen the Path of Reconciliation, they were able to understand people of different races: “They began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.... yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.” Through the **SPIRIT** they understood each other. No one was a **STRANGER**. **UNDERSTANDING** deflected any possible future conflict.

In closing, let us briefly look at the origins of Memorial Day.

Originally, this holiday commemorated the Civil War dead. The Civil War was the bloodiest war for Americans: More than 600,000 American lives were lost. Soon after the holiday was declared, the holiday was extended to include the honor of all the war dead. The power of remembering the dead serves a dual purpose: to honor those who died and to remember the tragedy of war. As Christians living in America, our unique role is to extend the invitation to the nation to consider the Path of Reconciliation. That one day our differences that we think are so important – will yield to common dreams. That one day we may understand one another and eventually sit down together and break bread.

Reflection Questions:

1. Which Path do you choose: the Path of Fear or the Path of Reconciliation? Do your daily choices reflect the path you have chosen? Does your choice of Path inform the way you feel about the Occupation in Iraq? Your attitude toward immigrants (regardless of legal status)?
2. If you think that it is not possible to realistically consider the Path of Reconciliation given the complexities of our world today, is Jesus' message even relevant to America? Do we then limit Jesus' relevancy to personal piety? Are you okay with that?