

## REFLECTION FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

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

The word Pentecost comes from a Greek word (*Pentekoste*) which means fiftieth. In our Christian context it is the fiftieth day after Easter. The celebration for Pentecost brings to an end the Easter Season.

There are moments in life when we can't breathe. Your child died and you stand holding on to someone in the hospital hallway, crying so hard, that you can't breathe at all.

Your spouse of many years says, "I love someone else," and you can't catch your breath. You bury your parents or loved one, and you stand by the grave, gasping for air.

But there are *positives* things in life which 'take our breath away too.' You stand to observe the beauty of nature and the majesty of God's creation touches you to the core. You turn to your friend and say, "Isn't this breath-taking?"

The nurse hands you your firstborn child, and you cradle that baby in your arms. A love more powerful than anything you've ever felt wells up inside you, and your heart is racing, and you can't breathe because of the miracle that you're holding.

Or your eyes meet the eyes of the person you love most in the world and you have to catch your breath.

Or the groom who stands at the altar, crying as he sees the bride come down the aisle. He is so happy... and I have to whisper to him, "Take a breath," and he responds, "And also with you."

The disciples before the coming of the promised Holy Spirit felt completely powerless. They were crippled with fear and felt totally incapable of carrying out the task of preaching the Gospel and witnessing to Jesus. They needed someone to empower them.

The Spirit, that is, the breath of God, gave them the ability on that first Pentecost Day to break down walls of division, to overcome fear, to love without measure, to serve as Jesus served, and to proclaim just how good and beautiful, and amazing are the works of the Lord!

Whenever the Scriptures talk about the spirit of God, its use the word 'pneuma.' That word does not just only mean 'spirit,' it also means 'breath' and 'wind' and 'soul.'

So, when we hear about God sending his Spirit upon that first generation of Christians, the Scriptures are telling us that God sent his breath, his life, his strength, into the disciples of Jesus.

Then the family of God, the Church, began, and grows in number even to this present day. The coming of the Holy Spirit provided the disciples with the energy, the momentum, the enthusiasm, the courage, the love, and the passion to get on with the task Christ had given them. Through the power of the Holy Spirit the early Christians became powerful witnesses and brave martyrs of the Christian Faith.

When we pay attention to the Holy Spirit, God's breath at work in us, we have experiences where division give way to unity, confusion gives way to harmony, and misunderstanding gives way to compassion.

Sometimes, the Spirit of the Living God sounds like a gentle breath, breathing peace upon us, the kind of peace that Jesus gave to his disciples on that first Easter Day. And sometimes the Spirit is like the tongues of fire which teach us how to speak the truth of Jesus in a world where so many other voices speak lies.

As we celebrate the feast of Pentecost, you should ask yourself: What has knocked the wind out of you recently? What part of you feels lifeless? What has hit you so hard that you are saying, "I don't know how to go forward?"

On this Pentecost day, the Holy Spirit is ready to help us breathe again, to renew us, to refresh us again. The Holy Spirit is ready to breathe life into *our* weakness, healing into *our* brokenness, peace over *our* pain and hope into *our* fearfulness. The Holy Spirit is God's own life and vitality – and that Spirit will enable you to live, even those parts of you that feel dead.

And when that happens, you will be commissioned to speak his word, to do his work, to love his people.

*"Come Holy Spirit  
Make our ears to hear  
Make our eyes to see  
Make our mouths to speak  
Make our hearts to seek  
Make our hands to reach out  
And touch the world with your love."*

May God grant us the Gifts, Fruits and Charisms of the Holy Spirit.

Fr Patrick