

**ST PAUL'S (RONDEBOSCH)**

**DAY OF PENTECOST**

**SUNDAY: 31 MAY 2020**

**READINGS: ACTS 2: 1-21/ PSALM 104:26-36// 1 CORINTHIANS 12:3B-13// JOHN 20:19-23**

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*Lord open our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit so that we listen and understand your Holy Word and be inspired to be witnesses of the healing power of the gospel by acts of love in your name AMEN*

Today is Pentecost Sunday – The birthday of the Church –but how ironic that we are not celebrating this Liturgical feast of Pentecost in the Church building – because of COVID 19. But I read a beautiful whatsapp message the Church building is not the Church, we the people are the Church.

Our Collect of today read as follows:

*Almighty God with wind from heaven and tongues of flame*

*You poured out your Spirit on the disciples*

*Set our hearts on fire with joy and power*

*And send us out as witnesses to the wonder of your love*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God now and forever*

On this Pentecost Sunday I would like us to reflect on how can we as the Church *Allow the Holy Spirit to set our hearts on fire with joy and power and be witnesses to the wonder of Christ's love to our broken, despairing and distressed communities during this time of COVID 19 and beyond when we have to rebuild the Church as Darron challenged us in his sermon two weeks ago.*

*So let us look at the background of the day of Pentecost*

Pentecost comes from the Greek word, "Pentekostos," which means fifty. It's the 50th day after the Passover Feast. Originally, the Jewish people celebrated this as the "Feast of Weeks," during which time Jews were instructed by God to bring a new grain offering and present it to the Lord. (Deuteronomy 16)

The crowd that is described in Acts 2 is the Jews who had come to Jerusalem in celebration of the Feast of Weeks. Jesus Christ, before his ascension, had also instructed the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and to “wait for what the Father had promised,” Acts 1 v 4”***Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised***

We read in Acts 2v 1 “***They (the disciples) were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting, they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.***

The sound was so loud it caught the attention of many others in Jerusalem, and in a short time a crowd had gathered around the house, where the believers, now filled with the Holy Spirit were speaking in other languages. But the Holy Spirit wasn’t only with those who were speaking, it was also with those who were hearing, for they all understood what was being said! Even though there was quite a diverse gathering of people in this place, each heard the Word in their own language! On that day, hundreds of people encountered God, were transformed by God, and began to share the good news of God in Christ Jesus.

**On that day empowered by the Holy Spirit the disciples became witnesses for Christ and the Church began.**

Each one of us can be a witness for Jesus Christ, and maybe you are thinking but how can I be a witness and we make all kind of excuses, ***just like the disciples.***

We find them Clueless, Leaderless, scared hiding together in a house somewhere in Jerusalem because Jesus told them to stay together in a place until the time in which the Holy Spirit was to come. Jesus knew that none of them could go make disciples without the help of the Holy Spirit. That is why he said to them in Acts 1 v 8 we read ***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.***

And what happened when they have received that power. The impossible became possible. The once denying Peter now filled with the Spirit preaches with boldness to thousands, and some 3,000 people turn their lives over to Jesus. They preached the good news in different languages.

**So my brothers and sisters empowered by the Holy Spirit we can become witnesses to the love of Jesus Christ to our broken communities.**

## HOW

*Firstly*, only the Holy Spirit can enable us to overcome our sense of inadequacy and imperfection and self-disqualification. We are so aware of our moral flaws and spiritual shortcomings and this leads us to decline when it comes to being witnesses for the good news of Jesus Christ.

We ask ourselves "*How can I encourage other people to become Christian when I'm such a sinner myself? How can I talk to people about faith in Christ when I have so many problems of my own?*" It is that stories, that problems, that struggles that you can share"

Imagine what would have happened if the earliest followers of Jesus thought this way. Peter could have said, "How can I urge people to give their lives to Christ? I've denied Him and claimed I never even knew Him." And think of Paul: "How can I tell the good news of Christ when they all know I helped brutalize Christians?" By the power of the Holy Spirit they overcame their sense of self-disqualification in order to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

In our Corinthians reading we read that all of us have received different gifts from the Spirit"

**My dear friends let us allow the power of the Holy Spirit to let us overcome our sense of disqualification so that we can use our gifts to become witnesses to the love of Christ in our broken community. Use your gifts tell your story**

*Secondly*, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to get past our differences in order to make contact with others. The gospel is for all people of every race, nation, gender and class. But we tend to live by the "birds of a feather" principle. We rather stay with people who are like us.

COVID 19 has infected and affected everyone irrespective of race, nation, gender or class. So how do we minister to those who are different from us who don't normally come to our services?

The events of that day give the Church today a blueprint or an instruction sheet on how to perform evangelism and mission, because spreading the Good news and bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ is our mission as the Church. God always provides help when he asks us to do something and Pentecost is a sign

that God has acted. God has taken the initiative to enable and empower his people through the Holy Spirit to be witnesses for him. We read that the people were amazed and the Lord had added to their number daily those who were saved. (Acts 2:46).

I know we love our Church and would like to worship together as a Church family but did you notice that the disciples were not bound to a church building yet they grew in numbers.

During the COVID 19 pandemic Church buildings were closed but the ministry and worship did not stopped. It continued virtually and in fact more people are hearing and receiving the Good News now. Even young people are sharing the Good news on the different social media platforms. Families are now having regular prayer meetings/Bible studies and services in their homes

Churches buildings are as testing centers and soup kitchens, which means the Church has made God's love, care and compassion visible to the vulnerable in the communities, the Church are reaching people that they would not have reached on a normal Sunday Service. (Don't get me wrong I don't say we must not open the Church, I so much want to be in the Church, to celebrate the Holy Mass with you –I am just saying that the Power of the Holy Spirit is not constraint to a Church building)

Sometimes catastrophic events or pandemics often unite people and can even bring out the best in them. No event, however, has the power to be as life sustaining and as life altering as the Spirit which has been given to all of us.

## **CONCLUSION**

My brothers and sisters if we look in our world, country and communities today what do we see?

DESPAIR// FEAR//HOPELESNES// POVERTY// ANXIETY// DEATH//  
ECONOMIC HARDSHIP// UNEMPLOYMENT//LOSS OF INCOME//  
ISOLATION//STRESS

***My dear friends are we willing on this Pentecost Sunday to allow the Holy Spirit to set our hearts on fire with joy and power and be bold witnesses to the wonder of Christ's love so that the Church can become meaningful for our broken communities***