

- Once again in today's readings we find Jesus disciples huddled behind closed doors praying, waiting and somewhat fearful. Only this time, this day things are about to change dramatically for them. On this day they receive an enduring gift, a permanent change that would allow them to live as Jesus' followers in the world. Into that room and into their lives comes the Holy Spirit.
- Suddenly the fear was gone. Isn't it amazing, hours before Pentecost they were huddled and frightened in a locked room. Moments after the gift of the Holy Spirit they are out in Jerusalem boldly proclaiming the Gospel in the sight of the very same people who crucified Jesus - and they had no fear!!
- They ventured out in confidence and courage guided by the Spirit.
- So what lessons can we take with us on this Pentecost Sunday? I'd offer three.
- First and foremost: God is squarely in control of things. Totally. God has big plans and small plans. Some we will see now, some later. If you want proof just consider how the Church came to be.
- Webster's dictionary defines "Church" as: "all Christians regarded as one spiritual entity, a gathering of Christians". Church is not the building where we meet, not the Pope, the priest, the deacon (they are all part of it). The core, the essence of Church is people, called together by the Spirit to become a community that worships together. We give glory to God; we thank God; we ask God – that's Church.
- And Church is God's plan.
- Our first reading today from "Acts of the Apostles" tells us how the plan unfolded. There was a special day chosen by God – today we call it Pentecost. On that day long ago people from all different nations gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate a Jewish feast that commemorated God giving Moses the 10 commandments. That's why our first reading tells us: "devout Jews from every nation were staying in Jerusalem".

- Coincidence?? No way !! God planned that day to send the Holy Spirit to establish the Church. On that first Pentecost the hearts and souls of over 3,000 people were drawn together into a believing community. The Church was born!! Pretty cool plan !!!
- God is squarely in control. God has plans for us. Plans filled with love and goodness. Plans that involve being with Him now and forever.
- The second lesson to take with us today is: God does not want us to live frustrated, stressed-out lives. God wants us to TRUST.
- Many of us, at one time or another in our lives, have huddled inside a locked room (physically or emotionally) like the Apostles did. Fears, worries and pressures of the world can really stop us from realizing our true purpose in life. They can paralyze us.
- Sometimes we forget just how close God really is. We forget that we also have received the Holy Spirit.
- This Spirit was breathed into us while still in our mother's womb. We are strengthened in this Spirit at Baptism and Confirmation. That Spirit is nourished each time we receive the Holy Eucharist.
- God asks us to trust in the Spirit. We need to be open to the promptings of the Spirit. We need to listen and be guided by the Spirit. And we are guided: we just need to be attentive to the signs. Sometimes the signs are big and life changing (moves, new jobs, illness). More often they are quiet little assurances from God that He loves us, is thinking about us (a smile or helping hand or kind word from someone).
- The third lesson we can take with us on this Pentecost Sunday is, like the Apostles, we are called to venture out in confidence and courage to spread the Gospel and bring Christ's love to others.
- A good starting point as we venture out is to consider the special gifts the Holy Spirit has given to each of us.
- There are the gifts we all receive: Wisdom (let's us live the way God wants us to live); Understanding (helps us to know how to live out Jesus teachings in each situation); Knowledge (to know God is more important than anything else); Right Judgment (help to make good, moral decisions); Courage (help to be

strong and firm in our faith and trust in God when facing problems or challenges); Wonder & Awe (ability to be amazed and thankful for all God has created).

- Then, as St. Paul tells us in our second reading, each one of us is given a different kind of spiritual gift, unique to us. The Church calls these gifts Charisms (Talents). Visible signs of the Spirit dwelling inside of us.
- The Catechism of the Church lists 24 Charisms. Things like being a gifted: artist, teacher, listener, healer, writer, musician, helper, prayer, and caretaker to name a few.
- We don't have enough time now to go over all 24, but here is some Pentecost homework. Sometime today go on the computer and Google the words "Catholic Charisms". You will be directed to websites that give you the list of Charisms along with details about each one. Read them. You will surely see yourself in or hear a calling to at least one Charism; because we are all uniquely gifted by God.
- Our job is to think about what special gift was given to us and then use it to spread the love of Jesus in the world. In today's second reading St. Paul tells us: "To each individual, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit". The key words here are "given for some benefit".
- The Charisms given to us are not for our exclusive use. They are given to us, for us to venture out and share with others. It is through these gifts we let the Spirit free to make God's presence, God's love visible to others. To let others know God loves them, God thinks about them, provides for them, forgives them. There is a world full of people longing to hear that message.
- Our Lord is counting on us, His Church, to deliver that message. He tells us so in the Pentecost Gospel reading when we heard these words: "Receive the Holy Spirit. As the Father has sent me so I send you".
- It couldn't be clearer. Our lives have a purpose and one thing is for sure: that purpose is not spending them in fear, behind locked doors.
- God bless you.