

Pentecost Sunday

In today's responsorial psalm the Church sings out: "Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth." All three readings describe how God has answered that prayer already.

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles and in the Gospel passage from John, we read of astonishing events that called covering disciples to step out of hiding and proclaim news that would condemn them and change the world forever! In the second reading Paul's words reach out into the future to us: "we were all given to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

It is our task to truly pray today's psalm response. Let us together beg the Holy Spirit to renew the earth by renewing the Church, sending many more men and women to serve in her various ministries.

SENT AS HE WAS SENT

Religious vocations have always been a mystery. Even in the Old Testament, we read of prophets who, when called, replied, "Lord! Why me?" Those who serve the Church today as priests, deacons, religious sisters or brothers, or lay ministers often report a feeling of wonder that God has chosen them to serve. Therefore, it should be no surprise if readers of today's scripture passages, which describe the disciples hiding in fear, might wonder, "Lord, why them?"

Those fearful disciples were, nonetheless, the recipients of wonderful gifts of the Spirit. On Easter Sunday evening, today's Gospel reports, Jesus gave his disciples the power to forgive sins. "Peace be with you," he said. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). From this first "sending" and its



powerful aftermath on Pentecost, the Church was born. Out of such fearful and unlikely origins, the Church has grown so strong that it has survived every kind of sin and persecution from the outside as well as from within.

"WHY US?"

While today's first reading and gospel describe these astonishing events, it is Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, who puts them into perspective. "We were all given to drink of the one Spirit," Paul proclaims. We can read with wonder about the frightened people Jesus first sent to bring the gospel to the world, or we can look around with wonder at the people who are sent today. "Lord, why us?" we may well ask.

Jesus has never left his Church orphaned. As the Father sent him, and as he sent his disciples, so he now sends us. How will each of us respond to this challenge? Peace be with us all. Copyright (c) J. S. Paluch Company

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Pentecost: A Stewardship Feast to Celebrate

A challenge for the Christian steward is accepting, and even rejoicing in, the fact that our commitment to faith is often a counter-cultural one. Perhaps this is nowhere more striking than in the quick cultural “end” of the Easter season, and our own belief that Easter is leading us through May to the great feast of Pentecost on May 24.

We see this discordance in many Christian celebrations adapted by the popular, commercial culture. While we are still enjoying the season of Christmas and looking forward to Epiphany, most American homes have taken the Christmas tree to the recycling center and moved on to thoughts of Valentine’s Day. During the sacrificial early days of Lent, there’s something jarring – yes, just wrong – about all those pastel Easter eggs and bunnies appearing in stores. And all that chocolate!

So, as Christian stewards, we feel no surprise that as we break our Easter fast and begin our meditation on the Resurrection, we find that the stores have tucked those chocolate bunnies away on discount shelves,



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and we’re off to the next commercially competitive venture. And as the great feast of Pentecost beckons us, we realize that the society around us gives this occasion hardly a passing nod. Apparently, there’s no money to be made from Pentecost, the day the Holy



Spirit came among the apostles and imbued in them the courage to be true followers of Christ. Courage, strength, faith, the Spirit – these are hard to market in the public square, aren’t they? The willingness to live and ultimately to die as martyrs for Christ, as the apostles did, these are things that are hard to package in bright paper. They don’t fit well in the greeting card aisle.

Perhaps during these days of May when we as Catholic stewards continue to celebrate the season of Easter and look forward to Pentecost, we might examine our own willingness to step outside the culture in our celebration of great Christian feast days. Keep the reminders of the Resurrection around you. Let your family prayer reflect the marvels of the season. Help your children to be aware of the liturgical calendar. Explain to them the meaning of the changing colors of the priests’ vestments. Dress up in red for Pentecost Sunday. But most importantly, educate yourself and your family on how powerful it is to understand and celebrate the great markers and mysteries of our shared faith experience.