

Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles of Jesus, as we heard in the first reading. It is considered by most theologians to be the “birthday” of the Church, so we can wish ourselves Happy Birthday.

Birthdays bring about a lot of pause for reflection don't they. They remind us both of our origins, and often time can remind us of the goals we still need to be about. In short, they remind us of our identity. And of course in all of this they are cause for celebration.

Today is no different for the Church. We are reminded of our origins in today's celebration, that our Church is rooted in the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, and through the promoting of the Spirit, their mission to preach the Gospel to all nations.

So often it seems that the Holy Spirit gets shortchanged in our Catholic Theology. We speak a lot about God the Father, and God the Son, but so often the Holy Spirit gets left out of the picture. So as we talk about Pentecost, and are all dressed in red (and hopefully there are no USC shirts in the congregation), we need to remember that the Holy Spirit does play an essential role in our lives as Catholics. In fact, without the Holy Spirit, the Church would not exist. Before the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, they had no clue as to how to go about the mission to preach the Gospel to all nations. But the Spirit came upon the Apostles and that made all the difference. After receiving the Holy Spirit, suddenly they began to preach the Gospel so that all could understand and do so in their native tongue.

So the very nature of the Church's mission to be universal is rooted in the work of the Holy Spirit. In the first reading we heard the people listing the numerous ethnicities and places where they are from, and upon hearing the Apostles preach in their native tongues they asked “What does this mean?” Well, what it means is that the Apostles are not speaking based on their own wisdom, but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is not a story about the wisdom of the Apostles to suddenly learn a bunch of languages as if they had just purchased the Rosetta Stone DVD's. It's about the Holy Spirit leading and guiding the Apostles in their mission to preach the Gospel.

The same Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church today. Sometimes it seems so easy for us to forget this. We often get caught in the mindset that when Jesus ascended into Heaven and left the Church to continue His mission as if we were tenants living in the building of an absentee landlord. We pay rent, but other than that the landlord has little influence on day-to-day activities. But the reality is the exact opposite. The Spirit exists in the Church and animates the Church in the same way in which the soul animates the body. In other words, it is the Holy Spirit that animates the Church, that moves and guides the Church.

One way we see this is in the sacraments. At baptisms the Holy Spirit is invoked upon the waters that are used to bring people into the Body of Christ. In the Eucharistic prayer, the priest calls the Spirit upon the bread and wine so that it may truly become the Body and Blood of Jesus. It's not the priest who works this miracle. The priest is merely an instrument for the Holy Spirit. At confirmation, the Holy

Spirit is called upon so that we as individuals can conform our lives more closely to the life of Christ.

So the Holy Spirit does play an important role in our lives as Catholics. It is truly animating our Church today, both the universal Church, as well as our local community. One way we at Peace of Christ invoke the Holy Spirit to guide our community is through the election of representatives to our Pastoral Council. Each year as we celebrate Pentecost, we not only recall the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, but we pray for the Holy Spirit to assist us in selecting parishioners who will serve on our Pastoral Council. This year we will be selecting 4 new members to our parish council to replace the members whose terms have ended. In a few moments we will be selecting a new member, but before we do, I would like you spend a few moments in silence to consider how the Holy Spirit is animating the work of this Parish, and ask the Holy Spirit to come upon us as we select a new council member, and additionally Holy Spirit to guide the new member of Parish Council so that our parish will be animated by the Holy Spirit and have the strength and courage to faithfully preach the Gospel to all Nations.