



Pentecost

THE NEW SHOFAR

Pentecost – our call to be missionaries

The Spirit does what he always does - transforms

As we learn from the Acts of the Apostles, it is the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, that marks a new chapter in the disciples' faith. It is this Spirit who empowers the once-frightened disciples to 'go out' into an unpredictable and even unknown world with courage and the conviction that life has conquered death in Jesus Christ. Imagine what kind of transformation they required before they could take that mission up with the sense of enthusiasm and hope they needed.

It is in the Risen Jesus that the promises of God had been fulfilled and it was his Spirit that made of the first disciples, and the apostolic generations to come, bold witnesses and bearers of this good news "to the ends of the earth" (*Acts* 1:8). They were the same men, the same men and women disciples who had followed him and come to believe in him as the One sent by God as their messiah and saviour. With that conviction in their hearts, nothing could hold them back, not even death itself.

This is the point the Feast of Pentecost reveals to us: it is the Holy Spirit who inserts the disciples more deeply into this mystery of Jesus, who weaves the faithful into the ongoing works of salvation in our world. The Spirit leads his followers to receive, live by and share in word and witness the truth of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. We are not only linked into the continuing works of our Saviour, but share with Abraham all that God has been doing in restoring humankind to the kind of relationship we had before Adam and Eve were enmeshed in sin through disobedience.

We are a holy people entrusted with a sacred mission

It is by the Spirit that we encounter this Christ, the light of the world, the Son of God who is with us "always, to the end of the age" (*Matt* 28:20). This union in Christ is what makes us holy. We are set apart, anointed and gifted for our mission in the world, a mission that has been ours from the time God knitted us together in our mother's womb...

Psalm 139:13-14.

That is all well and good, but how many of us are called to move outside into the wider world and work as "missionaries"? According to the mandate given at baptism, the answer is all of us! Again, how on earth are we going to be missionaries, evangelisers of the world around us, men and women who preach the Good News of Jesus Christ? The answer is clear: through the Holy Spirit. It is when we intentionally pause to discern what the Spirit is saying to us, to the Church, that we understand what God

wants of us. And, at the same time, become aware of the power we have to remain faithful.

How does the Holy Spirit bring the world to know and serve Christ?

This mission is fulfilled when we collaborate with what Christ continues to do in our world, a world into which he sent God's Holy Spirit. More concretely, he achieves this through the gifts with which we are showered at Baptism, Confirmation and every time we share in the sacraments of the Church. When we use these divine gifts, we bear fruit for others, and it is these fruits that feed the world. These fruits are:

Joy. Joy is an interior contentment that comes from being close to God and in right relationship with others. Joy also comes with speaking and upholding the truth, honesty and integrity in relationships, enduring hardships and decent conduct.

Peace. Peace is the harmony that occurs when justice prevails. It happens the dignity of each person is respected, legitimate differences are tolerated, the disadvantaged receive help, hurts are forgiven and the common good is upheld.

Patience. Patience is the virtue of suffering annoyance, insult or mistreatment with self-restraint, refusing to be provoked; and to suffer burdens and difficult tasks with resolve and determination. It is also the willingness to slow down for another's benefit, to set aside one's personal plans and concerns, to go at another's pace, and to take whatever time is necessary to address their need.

Kindness. Kindness is a warm and friendly disposition toward another. A kind person is polite and well mannered, respectful and considerate, pleasant and agreeable, cheerful and upbeat, caring and helpful, positive and complimentary.

Generosity. Generosity is a bigheartedness grounded in an abundance mentality. It is unselfish and expresses itself in sharing. It is extended to family and friends, strangers, and particularly those in need, and is offered not only as money, food and clothing, but also as time shared and assistance provided.

Faithfulness. Faithfulness is demonstrated by loyalty to friends, duties performed, promises kept, commitments fulfilled, contracts completed, vows observed and being true to one's word.

Gentleness. Gentleness is sensitivity for another person. It is concerned with another's welfare, safety and security. It is grounded in humility. The approach is careful, tender, considerate, affectionate and mild-mannered, free of all pushiness, roughness or abrasiveness.

Self-control. Self-control is self-mastery regardless of the circumstances, to be in control of one's self rather than to be controlled by temptations, events or other people, especially when under pressure or in times of crisis. It is to remain calm, cool and

collected, reasonable and even-tempered; to be alert and conscious, to proceed with caution and prudence, and to avoid an impulse or kneejerk response; to be a moderating influence; and to have the strength and courage to reject evil and choose good.