

1st Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34; 2nd 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13; Alleluia ; Jn 20:19-23

The Great Unknown.

Brothers and sisters, reflecting on the significance of Pentecost, one of the top 3 Solemnities in the liturgical year, let's explore what was Pentecost to the Hebrews of that time, connecting the 50 days between the evening of Resurrection Sunday, when the Lord appeared to the apostles and bestowed upon them the Holy Spirit, as described in today's Gospel, and the Sunday event portrayed by Saint Luke in the first reading, when the Holy Spirit descended upon them with a mighty rushing wind and appeared as tongues of fire. That Jewish community observed Pentecost as a remembrance of God's Covenant with Noah, which occurred 50 days after the great flood started. They also commemorate with gratitude God's Sinaitic Covenant with Moses, which took place 50 days after the beginning of the Exodus from Egypt. Notably, during the Sinaitic event, God manifested Himself in the form of wind and fire as He inscribed the commandments on stone tablets. Therefore, is the day to commemorate the starting of the New Covenant with the People of God, we can consider it the birthday of the Church missionary activity.

In the Scriptures, we learn that the disciples, who witnessed the glory of the risen Christ, were filled with the strength of the Holy Spirit. Who enlightened their understanding with the truth guiding them to deliver powerful discourses. Previously, they followed Jesus with faith, yet they struggled to grasp the full meaning of His teachings. But on Pentecost,

everything changed. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of strength, transformed them into courageous and solid witnesses. The Apostles boldly proclaimed the word of God throughout the streets of Jerusalem. The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was not an isolated event; His presence and guidance are evident throughout the Acts of the Apostles. He inspired the preaching, strengthened the faith, confirmed the calling of the Gentiles, and sent missionaries to spread the teachings of Jesus to distant lands. This profound reality depicted in Scripture is not a mere memory of the past, but a present and timeless reality of the Church. Jesus fulfilled His promise by rising from the dead and sending us the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us and gives us life.

But there is crucial question, that Pope Francis realistically observed 10 years ago¹ saying: *"Nowadays, many Christians do not know who the Holy Spirit is, what the Holy Spirit is. And sometimes you hear: 'But I have a good relationship with the Father and the Son, because I pray the Our Father to the Father, I am in communion with the Son, but with the Holy Spirit, I don't know what to do...' Or people say: 'The Holy Spirit is the dove, the one who gives us seven gifts.' In this way, the poor Holy Spirit always ends up being last and doesn't find a proper place in our lives."*

Therefore, I invite each one of you to turn to your neighbor, look into their eyes, and ask aloud: "Do you know the Holy Spirit? " Let's do it, all with me: **"Do you know the Holy Spirit?"**

¹ POPE FRANCIS, Morning meditation, The unknown Holy Spirit, Monday, 13 May 2013

Be aware that we're not asking "what" or "who" the Holy Spirit is, but rather if we **know Him**. Why is it important to know a person? If we don't know them, we cannot love them. This is crucial, because we cannot love what we do not know, and when we love someone, we want to know them more. Just ask those who are in love, we want to know each other more and more.

Let's start with the basics²: The Holy Spirit is the personal love between the Father and the Son. He is a person with intellect and will, and He is only one God. The Holy Spirit dwells within all the baptized. He is the one who reveals us God, and makes known to us Christ, his Word. We know also that God has bound salvation to the sacrament of baptism, but He is not bound by His sacraments³; therefore, He also can work in extraordinary ways and bestow His grace upon those who, through no fault of their own, are not able to be baptized. It is God's mercy and His knowledge of the individual's heart that determines how He pours out His Spirit.

Now let's explore a contrast: **without the Holy Spirit**, God is distant, Christ remains a figure in the past, the Gospel are lifeless words, the Church is a mere organization, authority becomes domination, mission becomes propaganda, liturgy becomes a series of empty rituals, and the Christian life becomes a moral of slaves. On the other hand, **with the Holy Spirit**, the cosmos rises and groans in the birth of the Kingdom, humanity struggles

² (CCC 687)

³ (CCC 1260)

against the flesh, Christ is present, the Gospel becomes a source of life, the Church becomes a sign of Trinitarian communion, authority becomes liberating service, mission becomes a Pentecost, liturgy becomes a memorial and anticipation, and human life is divinized.⁴ **How do we choose to live, according to the first approach or the second approach, without the Holy Spirit or with the Holy Spirit?**

Now, to know Him in depth, being aware that He is within us unless we reject Him, let's explore the Scriptures and understand some of the main images that God chose to reveal the Holy Spirit to us. He chose the most common, and tangible elements: wind, water, fire, oil, and a dove. The action of the Holy Spirit in the Church is precisely present with these symbols. We will have time to explore only 2 of them.

The wind corresponds to the noun spirit, in Hebrew "ruach," and in Greek "pneuma.", expressed as the breath of God. Through this element, God has taught us to grasp the essence of this spiritual reality. The wind manifests itself in two forms in nature: the external wind that blows anywhere, and the internal wind that we breathe becoming an intimate part of us. The Scripture uses both forms to symbolize the Holy Spirit. On Easter day, Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, by his breath, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." On the day of Pentecost, a strong wind filled the house. Each form carries a distinct meaning. The external wind symbolizes God's strength and

⁴ Mons. Ignacio Hazim, Uppsala Ecumenical Conference Speech, 1968

power. It represents the unstoppable force of nature, shaking even the vastness of the oceans. Therefore, it shows the Spirit's strength. On the other hand, the air we breathe, the internal wind, signifies intimacy and tenderness. Nothing is more intimate than the air we breathe, as it becomes a part of us. It is the medium through which we connect with others using our voices. Thus, it signifies that the Holy Spirit encompasses both the might of God and the tenderness of God—the gentle companion of our souls. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the source of our strength and courage. He upholds us in our weakness and walks alongside us in our solitude. Saint Basil described the Holy Spirit as the one who creates intimacy with God.

The other symbol we will explore today is **ointment**, the spiritual anointing. In the Old Testament, prophets, kings, and priests were anointed with **fragrant oil**. This signified their consecration and transformation to serve God's people. These figures were all foreshadowing the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ. This highlights the immense significance of the symbol of anointing, which has given Jesus His name: Christ. When Jesus came, He was anointed in the Jordan River. After His baptism and return to Nazareth, He cited the words of the prophet Isaiah, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me."⁵ Therefore, in Jesus' baptism, an anointing took place, not with physical ointment but with the Holy Spirit, a spiritual anointing. This means that Jesus was anointed as **the** prophet, king, and priest. The early Christians recognized the importance of this event

⁵ (Lk 4, 18a)

in Christ's life and established rituals of anointing: in baptism, confirmation, ordination, and the anointing of the sick. Anointing is a ritual that goes during the entire Christian journey. However, these rituals alone are insufficient to fully experience the grace of anointing. We need what saint Augustine has referred to as "living in continued anointing," the opportunity to receive anew the effect of the sacramental anointing received in baptism and confirmation. This process is akin to renewing, resurrecting, and rekindling the flame given but hidden within us. Thus, what we do and say is not merely the result of our will but also of divine influence. This continued anointing entails entering prayer with a disposition to receive a surge of the Holy Spirit surrendering completely ourselves to Him. Through prayer, we perceive the power of the Holy Spirit. Every person needs this daily spiritual anointing to experience the effect of the will of the Holy Spirit on our own will. And consequently, we will begin to encounter, with our senses and understanding, the extraordinary presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the circumstances of life and within our interior.

Let's repeat together the psalm response and the antiphon slightly modified as the short prayer asking for the anointing of the Holy Spirit giving and surrendering ourselves to Him:

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be re-created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. Anoint us oh, Lord! Amen.