

Some have asked me what all the white chairs are for? Well, on Saturday we ordained 5 young men for the transitional diaconate and on Sunday the Bishop confirmed a number of young people. Not a bad way to end Pentecost, sending the Holy Spirit on deacons to be and on those to be confirmed.

When one thinks of Pentecost, we usually picture the disciples with flames of fire above their heads. However, the celebration of Pentecost in one form or another had been around long before the Easter season came on to the scene. We could say that in the various ways it was celebrated, led us to the season of Easter, with one building upon another.

It started out as a feast of harvest - 50 days after planting the spring harvest they celebrated the first fruits that came forth at that time. The first fruits that first came up were offered back to God in thanksgiving for them. One might offer in God's name to someone in need.

And finally, it evolved into a feast of the Sinai Covenant with Moses. Fifty days after Passover, whereby the Hebrews escaped the slavery from Egypt, to the time where Moses ascended Mt Sinai and received the commandments, engraved in stone by the Holy Spirit.

And today, of course, the Holy Spirit engraves them into our hearts. Every person knows them, because without them, society dies.

Then there is the feast of Pentecost that we celebrate today: 50 days after Easter. The feast should move one beyond "Though Shall not" religion to what we can do with our faith. If in the post Pentecost age, we measure our spirituality by the 10 Commandments, that's not what I call raising the bar. The Pentecost is all about life, giving birth to the Church on the move.

+We see through the centuries how the Holy Spirit has led the Church to deeper truths, such as her dogmas and Councils. We see how it has continually worked to unite the faith, leading us through some rather dark periods in the Church.

That is what I love about the Catholic faith, that no matter what may happen, the Holy Spirit will always guide the Church to truth. Nothing will ever destroy our Catholic faith, for the Holy Spirit will continue to guide the Church into the future, until the Coming of Christ.

+50 days after the Easter event came the fires of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. The Apostles, even after witnessing the risen Christ, were still in fear, locked in a room. They still needed the promised Holy Spirit.

And when it came, they burst out the room into the world. They were given the gifts of the Holy Spirit, seeds if you will, and from these are to come the fruits of the Holy Spirit given back to God in the lives we live.

Have you ever given someone a gift and been so excited when they used and enjoyed it? On the other hand, have you ever given a gift only to find they have never used it, never taken from the box? Pentecost offers for us to open the box of our heart and find the gifts of the Holy Spirit, for God has implanted seeds of greatness within each one of us to be used for His glory. Remember the commercial that said, "Where's the beef?" Well, I suspect at the end of our time on earth God may ask, "Where is the fruit?"

+Jesus likened the work of the Holy Spirit to the wind. We can't see wind, but we know wind by its effects. We can't see the Holy Spirit, but we can see how it has changed the lives of so many people.

+Pentecost is the reversal of the Tower of Babel and its confusions of the various languages. This confusion of "language" can cause many hardships. We see this in troubled relationships, when a couple appears to be talking in foreign tongues to one another, forgetting the one language that brought us together. What was that language? Love.

Jesus revealed to us at Pentecost the one language we can all understand, and that is love. Love is one language that brings us together for it flows from the Love of the Father with the Son proceeding the Holy Spirit, bursting into our world. That language of love leads us to forgive and be forgiven.

+Then there is the Holy Spirit that touches our lives individually. A great gift of the Holy Spirit is freedom. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:17 "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

*It is in those moments where my calendar of events overwhelms, and then I experience the comfort of the Holy Spirit: You will get through it. It sets us free from fear to peace just as it did the Apostles on that first day of Pentecost.

*Or it might be that moment we are inspired to pray for someone or to say something to someone in their time of need. Or to join a ministry or when it prompts us to give more.

When I think of this dimension of Pentecost, I think of a guy named Larry. A true story I love to tell in relation to Pentecost. Larry wanted to be a pilot, but poor eyesight nullified this. All he could do is watch planes from his lawn chair. Watching these planes, Larry got an idea.

He went to the army surplus store and bought a bunch of weather balloons and filled them with helium. He then tied them to his lawn chair, which was anchored to the ground. He packed a lunch and brought along his BB gun, figuring, he could shoot a few balloons when he was ready to come down. It didn't work out that way.

Once he cut the rope, he shot up into the sky like a cannon ball. He kept going and did not level out until 11000 feet! He was too afraid to shoot any of the balloons, fearing it would upset his chair. Larry floated for 14 hours, until a Pan Am pilot saw him float by.

The pilot radioed in and said a guy just floated past him in a lawn chair with a gun! A helicopter was dispatched, which flew above Larry, causing the chair to go down. Once on the ground he was arrested. As he was being taken away, a reporter asked him, "Why did you do it?" To which Larry responded, "A man just can't sit around."

A perfect illustration for those of us who live beyond Pentecost, we can't become complacent, but a Church always on the move, ascending beyond our areas of comfort.