

Father Brad Neely

Pentecost Sunday, Cycle C –

[Spps: May 27, 2007]: Revised for Spps/Nez: May 23, 2010

Acts 2: 1-11; 1Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13; Jn 20: 19-23

To refresh our memory,
the feast of Pentecost (the 50th day)
in our ancient Jewish heritage.

It *was* celebrated 50 days
past the Feast of Passover,
and its significance is two fold:
1)-- It is an agricultural festival,
celebrating the first fruits of the harvest
brought to the Temple and offered to God,
2)—It is a celebration
of the giving of the law
to the nation Israel on Mount Sinai,
thought to have been given roughly 50 days
past the *original* Passover,
which set in motion Israel's freedom from bondage.

In our New Testament times,
we look particularly
at the special outpouring
of the Spirit of Christ and the heavenly Father
upon humanity---
poured out as never before—50 days after Easter.
It is "how God is with us" in this age,
thus, we constantly encounter the HS.

- * The Holy Spirit shaped the Tradition of the Church.
- * The Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures we proclaim,
the Scriptures that were formed within that
Tradition.
- * The HS guides and assists
the Church's ongoing teaching authority.
the Magisterium.
- * The HS share with us divine life
in our sacramental liturgies.
- * The HS intercedes for us as we pray; +
- * The HS builds up the Church and her ministries.
(ccc688)

Pentecost is representative
of the mysterious God who makes it possible for us
to share in divine life.
That God's Spirit is poured out upon the world
is mysterious.
That the HS of God is present with us invisibly
is included in that mystery.
As I've mentioned before,
in God's wisdom,
the humanly visible experience
of the invisible God in our life

is represented through *human signs and symbols*:
i.e. words, gestures, various forms of matter.

The word "Spirit" itself
comes from the Hebrew word, *ruah*.
In its primary sense,
ruah means breath—air--wind.
In this case, it is ***God's breath***---
the breath of ***God's divine Spirit***.
In the second creation story contained in Genesis,
it says, "*God fashioned man of dust from the soil.
Then he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life,
and thus man became a living being.*"
Once God breathed,
our own body, spirit, and soul were created.
We are not an accident of nature.

Another symbol of the HS is **water**.
In the ***first*** creation story,
the Holy Spirit is described this way;
"*In the beginning God created the heavens and the
earth.
Now the earth was a formless void,
there was darkness over the deep,
and God's spirit hovered over the water.*"
*The gestation of our human birth take place in **water**.
* The **waters** of Baptism signify our birth
into the divine life,
and facilitated, like all sacraments,
by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is further symbolized in **anointing**---
to seal, to bond....
***Anointing** with oil is the sign
of the sacrament of Confirmation,
a strengthening of the presence of the Holy Spirit
to help us live out the life
we entered into in baptism.
* ***Jesus himself*** is the ***Christ***---
[Messiah in the Hebrew language].
"Christ," "the Messiah," means the "**anointed**
one."
He is the ***anointed one of God***.
*The Virgin Mary conceived Christ by the Holy Spirit,
who, through the angel,
proclaimed him ***Christ—the anointed one*** at his
birth.

The HS is present in **fire**---

"**fire** symbolizes the *transforming energy* of the Holy Spirit's actions.

The Holy Spirit transforms all who are touched.

* John the Baptist proclaims Christ

*"as the One who will baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with **fire**."*

* And as detailed in our first reading

from Acts of the Apostles,

The HS appeared to the disciples

as "tongues as of **fire**,"

filling them with the presence of God.

We hear in the HS working in the Old Testament through **clouds** and **light**.

* The **cloud** reveals the living and saving God, while at the same time,

veiling the transcendence of His glory:

* The **cloud** guides Moses and the Israelites during their wandering in the desert.

In the New Testament:

* The Spirit comes upon the Virgin Mary and "**overshadows** her,"

so that she might conceive

and give birth to Jesus.

* On the mountain of Transfiguration,

the Spirit, in a "bright **cloud**"

comes and overshadows Jesus, Moses, and

Elijah---

and a voice came out of the **cloud** saying,

"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him."

* And, the **cloud** took Jesus

out of the sight of the disciples

on the day of his Ascension

and will reveal him as Son of Man in glory

on the day of his final coming."

The symbol of the **dove**---

* denotes the end of the great flood---

the flood that symbolizes baptism.

A **dove** released by Noah returns

with a fresh olive-tree branch,

as a sign that the earth is again habitable.

* At His own baptism,

Christ comes up from the water,

and the HS, in the form of a **dove**,

comes down upon him, and remains with him.

The Spirit comes down and remains also

in the purified hearts of all those baptized.

We hear in Acts of the Apostles

about the apostles and other disciples of Christ

laying low and living in fear in the locked room.

It is the descent of God's Holy Spirit

that brought them to real life---

that animated them and invigorated them

to go out into the world

to spread the Good News of Christ.

The same HS is with us today.

Let us use our human freedom

to make way daily for the HS of God,

to guide us into all truth---

to be with us in each step we take

to the heavenly kingdom.