Pentecost

May 20, 2018

St. Patrick

We heard the Risen Jesus’ words in today’s Gospel, first given on that first Easter night: **“As the Father has sent me, so I send you**.” Jesus first spoke these words to the apostles and other disciples gathered in that upper room. He’s also talking to *each* of us, *all* of us, this Pentecost Sunday. **“As the Father has sent me, so I send *you*.”**

In another parish where I have served, well—fifty years ago, when he was 19-years-old, this young man was in a terrible car accident. Since then, he’s been on permanent disability. One Sunday, he started his ministry: after the second Mass on each Sunday as the number of bulletins dwindle, he got a fresh supply of bulletins and made sure these were at each exit of the church. For fifteen years he faithfully did it every Sunday. Once, he tripped and fell in church, cutting his arm. He was helped up, bandaged up…he kept on going.

St. Paul teaches us today: **“To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.”** That was John’s simple way of taking hold of the baton handed him by the Risen Jesus, and fulfilling his ministry. **“So I send you…”**

In the sixteenth century, a man named Alphonsus Rodriguez tried to become a Jesuit (the order of which Pope Francis is a part). He had had almost no education. His application was denied. Eventually, they let him be the doorman of the Jesuit college on the Mediterranean island of Majorca.

For forty years he welcomed at the front door the destitute and Spanish nobility, the sick in need, and many students. When he was taking a guest to another part of the house, if the doorbell rang, he would take care of that guest and then, returning to the front door, he would say again and again, “Here I come, Lord” (1). Everyone he met at the front door, he welcomed as if they were Jesus. Jesuit students began to see him as their spiritual mentor. At his funeral Mass, thousands came to pray in gratitude. Eventually, this greeter was canonized a saint.

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In a parish where I served, there was a high school girl so shy, she rarely looked you in the eyes. She didn’t want to be an altar server; it was in front of folks. Then, another parishioner—85-years-old and not a bashful bone in her body—asked this girl to help her as a greeter, welcoming all who came to the front door of the church. They worked side-by-side, and something blossomed in the teenager. That elderly woman saw potential—gifts of the Spirit in that introverted teenager—and that girl began to smile and look each person in the eyes, as if they were Jesus coming through that front door.

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Yesterday, another Dorothy Day House of Hospitality was dedicated, and on Monday, this lovely, spacious home—not far from us here—will begin welcoming homeless families. In that ministry, and also in our outreach of our St. Patrick Center, I’ve seen folks become passionate in reaching out with love to the discarded in our midst. It’s Spirit-led, and they meet Jesus in the exchange.

St. Patrick’s: This Pentecost the Risen Jesus is talking to *each* of us, *all* of us: **“As the Father has sent me, so I send…*you*.”** He’s passing on the baton to us, and we’re not by ourselves. Jesus’ Holy Spirit nudges us, accompanies us, and keeps us going.

A month after Pope Francis was chosen Bishop of Rome, he preached on the Holy Spirit, saying this: **“We want to tame the Holy Spirit. And that is wrong. Because the Spirit is God, and the Spirit is the wind that comes and goes and you do not know where. The Spirit is the power of God, what give us consolation and strength to move forward. But move forward! And this bothers you…”** (2)

On this Sunday, and during each Mass, together we call upon the Holy Spirit over our gifts of bread and wine. And—amazing, isn’t it!—we believe they become the flesh and blood of the Risen Christ. So also, can that same Spirit transform us truly to be the Body of Christ in our world today.

This Pentecost Sunday, the Risen Jesus breathes his Spirit upon us. Don’t try to **“tame the Holy Spirit.”** Let lose his Spirit within us and among us!

1. Hearts on Fire: Praying with Jesuits, edited by Michael Harter, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1993), pg. 53.
2. This comes from Pope Francis’ homily of April 17, 2013. See [www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=17610](http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=17610).