

7th Sunday of Easter (Ascension) - June 2, 2019

In the 1st Reading today, there are wonderful insights about the Mission that Jesus is entrusting to His Church. We are dealing with the first 11 verses of the 1st chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Here's what it said: "While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for 'the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'"

It is quite clear that the Apostles had no real sense of what He was talking about. This is despite the fact that He had spoken to them about this gift He was giving them on many occasions The Gift of the Holy Spirit! He had even said to them, "It is good for you that I should go, because unless I go you will not receive the gift of The Holy Spirit." Yet, they couldn't grasp itIt was too far beyond their understanding. That is why He repeats here: do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the gift The Holy Spirit.

If we are really honest, we must say that there has been a consistent movement in the Church and in the world without that gift. The lack of the presence of the Holy Spirit is clear in our Church and in our world. An enormous spirit of unrest and conflict and resistance reigns, instead. We see the struggle in the very next sentence of the 1st Reading: "When they had gathered together they asked him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?"

"It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by His own authority. But you will receive the power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth." When He had said this He was taken up. The poor Apostles were struggling with the reality now that He had been raised up surely, He will restore the Kingdom..... of course, they were thinking in terms of conquering defeating enemies..... Jesus' message was the very same as it had been all along that is not the type of Kingdom I have come to establish.

One Methodist minister, a Scripture Scholar says of this piece, “Are you now going to restore the kingdom?” that Jesus looked at the Apostles and said: ‘Guys ! You’re in sales I’m in management, don't worry about it.’ Now, that is a perspective indeed ! I am sure Jesus had much more in mind and that was the gift He was giving them The Holy Spirit.... who would remind them and teach them in all He had taught them ! Now, that is really powerful stuff What He is saying, in short, is: if you receive this gift, things will gradually become clear to you if not, you will struggle greatly in the journey of life.

It is clear to see how that worked in the Early church, and there is no reason whatsoever that it won't continue to work in His Church today. But, it does require a receiving of His gift of the Holy Spirit! So, how are we doing in that department? How are we following the gift and the power of the Holy Spirit? Well, we have certainly made progress, not without growing pains, and struggle, and resistance and difficulty. We have had wonderful blessings as a result of ChristLife, and the subsequent Small Group Faith-sharing. We have made a lot of progress. We have seen lots of individual growth, and lives changed by the power of the Holy Spirit through these opportunities. We have heard the wonderful testimonies of changed lives by many of our brothers and sisters. We have heard those testimonies from here on the altar, and in our bulletin, but we still have so much to accomplish in order to change a culture within our Church, and throughout the world. We have come a long ways and still have a long ways to go in order to attain, and become the Church He is calling us to be.

The Lord has great plans for us, I have no doubt about that. That is why I am totally invested in these current plans, the Renovation and expansion plans, and the future He has planned for us. If we don't see a future that He has planned for us, then all of this energy, all of this hope is useless. Unless we see beyond ourselves and our own needs, and that we are investing in an upcoming generation, then we will never attain our full potential.

Now I should like to place that firmly in the Gospel that we just heard today. This passage is known as the Sacerdotal prayer (Priestly prayer of Jesus) what an extraordinary prayer Jesus is praying for the Apostles, and all others who would believe in Him through the teaching of the Apostles: “ Lifting up His eyes to Heaven, Jesus prayed, saying: ‘Holy Father, I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me

and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.”

That oneness is the hardest thing in the world to attain ! No question about it ! It is hardest thing to attain in my family, and I am sure in yours also. It is the hardest thing to attain in the work-place, it is hard to attain in the Church, and it is hard to attain in our world. That is certainly not hard to believe, because each of us has our own very definitive views of how things should be. But, I am certain that His prayer is extremely powerful, and if we are bringing about His Plan it will most certainly come to fruition.

You are all aware of the recent events surrounding the Cathedral of Notre Dame. It is my understanding that they were trying to raise \$12 million for renovations before the fire, they had \$10 million in place and it seemed to have stalled. My last check this morning says they have over \$1 billion in pledges right now! How does one explain that ? Yes, it is pretty miraculous ! Yes, maybe Divinely Inspired ! I am not advocating a fire but I am advocating a Godly response to our present campaign.

I like where we are at Our brothers and sisters determined not to go with professionals to raise the money for this project, and to rather save that \$100,000! That was a very powerful statement of oneness on their part, and I respected their decision. I respected their decision, despite the fact that it is regularly accepted, that without the assistance of these professionals, a lot of money remains on the table. I trust them, and I trust you, that you will be responsive to His invitation without trying to cajole, or persuade you as to how to respond.

This I have come to know and appreciate after 42 years of priesthood, it will be 43 in 10 days, If I, or any professionals persuade you what to give I may make you bereft, If the Lord persuades you what to give, it will be an investment in our future, and it will be plenty. We all love to make investments, but there is almost always an anxiety in that. But, it is usually for the future, the future of our family.

If the Lord blesses the bread that I have, there will be an abundance, and some left over. So I simply invite to make your response, prayerfully and reflectively.

—Fr. Gerry Hurley