

Pentecost Sunday 2013 Year C

Last Sunday reference was made to the Holy Spirit, and this Sunday can be said to be the feast of the Holy Spirit par excellence. We said also that according to John's gospel Christ handed over the Spirit upon dying on the cross (Jn 19:30), and this Sunday the first option reading is the sequel to this, when, corresponding to *handing over* the Spirit, the disciples *receive* the Spirit, Jn 20:22. What does this Holy Spirit do?

The Holy Spirit is God's Spirit, the same one who hovered over the primordial, chaotic waters at the creation in the first verses of Genesis. It is the Spirit which the psalm says renews the face of the earth, which can create, or recreate, that which is dead. The second option reading, from Romans 8, says that it was the Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead, and who will also give life to our mortal bodies. It is a Spirit of boldness and power, who gives us the confidence of the children of God, as opposed to fearful slaves. This Spirit enables us to call upon God familiarly, Abba, and assures us that we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with him so that we may be glorified with him" (Rom 8:14-17).

The Holy Spirit makes us a new creation. We are reborn through the Spirit, Jn 3:5-8. But it is not an individual thing. We are reborn as a people, as the new people of God, created or recreated in Christ, on Pentecost. Israel was born as God's people on Sinai, amidst trumpet blasts and thunder and fire, Ex 19:16-19. There the old covenant was made and God gave his Law, but it was a covenant soon to be broken, when still in Sinai the people made the golden calf, Ex 32. The prophet Jeremiah had prophesied a new covenant, when God's Law would be written in the people's heart, which would be changed, and sins forgiven, Jer 31:31-34. Now, on Pentecost, this new covenant is made, with many different kinds of people, who all understand each other. The fire which comes upon them purifies their hearts, so that they can now truly obey God's Law. This had been prophesied by the Book of Deuteronomy, which said that after a great experience of exile and suffering, Israel would reflect on all that had happened and would turn to the Lord. Then the Lord would circumcise their hearts, and they would be able to love the Lord with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their might, Dt 30:1-10. This is quite similar to Jeremiah's new covenant; see Dt 28:69-29:3.

On Pentecost, after the Spirit was given, Peter makes the first proclamation of the gospel. He tells the story of Jesus, who went around doing good and healing but who was crucified according to God's predetermined plan. He has now been made Lord and Christ, even though the

people had crucified him. Upon hearing this, the people were pierced to the heart and turned to God and were baptized for the remission of sins and receiving of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:1-38.