

Year A Pentecost

Ez 37:1-14; Ps 104; Rm 8:22-27; Jn 7:37-39

ROME. This Sunday's readings are about the new creation in the Spirit. We were created by God, the God whose Spirit hovered over the primeval waters of chaos. God's work of "creation" is also a work of putting order, of gathering from dispersal, of helping us "get it together."

Once we are born, we are on a journey, a journey into life, into our true selves, into God, into happiness. Many things, many aspects of ourselves, die in this journey, so that a new life can emerge. There are many purifications to be undergone, so that new, healthier branches can grow on the tree which we can be likened to. The various possibilities for our first reading speak of a primeval dispersal and confusion (Babel) which is reversed in the new creation in the Spirit which is Pentecost. Or of the creation of a new people, "on the third day," as at Sinai, whose stormy winds are echoed in the Upper Room at Pentecost. God's people had been waiting for the Holy Spirit to be poured forth, a Spirit of fiery love and strength and confidence (Joel), and this happened "in the last days" at Pentecost. Pentecost means the fiftieth day, and it is the culmination of Passover. It was only possible because of Jesus' sacrifice: he allowed the Spirit which came into him at his baptism to make of him a holocaust offering (Hb 9:14). As we are baptized into him and follow him holding tight to him, he brings us into the very presence of God, which is salvation. It makes new persons out of us, although this is a daily process of dying to our old, selfish, fearful selves in order to be reborn into new, loving, free-from-fear images of Christ. We have received the Spirit of re-creation as the pledge of our salvation, but we groan still as we await, in hope, our full redemption. The Spirit sustains us in our daily struggle.

My second night of pilgrimage was spent in a little farm in Châteauneuf-de-Galaure in central France, near the home of Marthe Robin, a woman who was paralyzed, blind, confined to a dark room and who experienced Jesus' passion every week for some fifty years. She had gradually lost her health and God taught her to accept her suffering as a vocation. She decided to love and inspired the Foyers de Charité, places of fiery love for a new Pentecost, and many eminent Church people came to consult her. She is a Servant of God.