

Sermon for Pentecost

John 7.37–52; 8.12

Fr. John Vazquez

June 23, 2024

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—Amen!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. One God, one man, one Holy Spirit. And the Son of the Virgin. And the Son of the Virgin.

Si empiezo hablar in espanol a ustedes nadie me entederia. Vas a ser confudido. . . If I begin to speak this sermon to you in Spanish, that's going to be confusing. Maybe a couple people here will understand. Today we remember the Holy Spirit coming down upon the Apostles in tongues of fire, and then they go out to preach the good news to all the world. And in order for us to understand this better, as is often the case, we have to understand the Old Testament.

If the book of Genesis (ch 11), the people of Babylon are beginning to build this huge temple. This huge tower that is gonna go up and touch the heavens. And the reason they're doing this is so that they can make a name for themselves, as the scripture says, they want be great upon the earth, but they want to do it according to their way.

They are wanting to worship their own gods and not the true God. And so God says, look at what man is gonna do. And God knowing that man would be another led astray. He goes down and confuses the tongues. And so when they're trying to work together, they don't understand each other. And so from this, all mankind spreads out on the earth.

And they have their own tribes and their own nations. And this is the beginning of the nations.

But today, when the Holy Spirit comes down, each man, you just heard, each man hears the good news in his own tongue (Acts 2). But, from these men, who were from Galilee. They said,

how do we understand the good news of God?

Each of us hears it in our own language. Well, of course, this is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes, though, the things that happen to us in our lives can seem like it's like a different language to us. Why would God have these different things happen to us? Right. The same question over and over.

Why is there evil? Why are there wars? Why is there suffering? And so sometimes it can seem like God is speaking to us in a different language and we just don't understand what is going on. How can this be? How can this be good? Right? I try to believe, I try to do the things that God asks me to do.

So it can seem like we are on a different wavelength, different languages are being spoken to us by God. Because it is true that God comes to us in the things that happen in our lives. The things that take place in our lives, God is trying to speak to us. He is trying to give a word to us—His Word. The pain that we feel in our lives, is Him trying to speak to us, trying to talk to us.

And He can use, He uses whatever means he can. He uses blessings, He uses suffering, He uses pain. And these are the three languages that you can say that God speaks to us. These are the ways He comes to us and tries to make Himself known. Right? So what can we do to try to understand the language of God?

Well, first of all, we don't want to run away from trying to understand. We don't want to just not seek to understand, and then turn away, and say, "I give up, this isn't going to be, you know, beneficial, I'm done." That can be a temptation for us. To say, "this is too much. I can't do this. I'm just going to enjoy my life. I'm going to do the best I can."

We can be tempted to do that—all of us. At different times in our lives. Right? But the other option is to try to understand. To try to learn God's language.

Try to learn God's language. The way we can learn and understand what He's trying to, what He's trying to say to us is through trying to acquire the Holy Spirit. This great interpreter of tongues. He's one who gives us wisdom and understanding and knowledge (1 Cor 2.11). But

how do we acquire the Holy Spirit? Well, that is a lifelong process.

And it's difficult. It's hard, but it's good. And when we do acquire the Holy Spirit, there's always more to be given, more light to be shed on the inside of our hearts, and in the world, bringing light to the world. And so, we know, as I've talked about before, that the Holy Spirit is in the Church.

When we come to the Church, It's like taking a drink of water. As I've said before, we're taking a drink of water, we're quenching our thirst. We're being illumined. We receive understanding. So the Holy Spirit is in the Church. So we come to the church to try to acquire the Holy Spirit. But it's not just here in the Church.

The Church is the place that informs our lives, how we live our life, and the actions and decisions that we make. So I begin by coming to the Church. But then I have to make effort after that. I have to do something. I have to be available to God for Him to come and dwell within me. So there are a couple of things we can do.

We can begin by coming to Church. Next, we have to understand what the prophet Isaiah says about when God, in God's voice, God speaks to His people. He says, "My works are not your works, and My ways are not your ways." (Is 55.8) We have to understand that the way that God works is not how we would think. It's not how we would prefer.

It's not how we would want. But this is how God works with us. So we come to the Church and we understand that God's ways are not our ways. And we also understand that He's always trying to pursue us... always trying to come to us. So, in whatever circumstance, whatever joy difficulty.

You know, you try to raise your children, and you try to be, kind as often as you can, but sometimes, they don't understand that.

And so you have to be firm. You have to say, "no, this is the way it is. You're going to get hurt if you do that. You're going to drown if you jump in the water and you don't know how to swim. You cannot jump in the water."

You have to be firm. Sometimes God has to be firm with us, because He knows the decision

we're going to make is going to lead us down the wrong path. It's going to be for our destruction.

And so we experience that firmness as pain and suffering, right? Because it's not what we want in the moment, right? But God is always trying to come to us, always trying to speak to us.

Okay, so we come to the Church. We understand that God's ways are not our ways.

And then, we have to seek to understand, just as best as we can, in the sense that we try to conform our thinking to the thinking of the Church. The thinking which is the thinking of Christ, right? We conform our minds, St. Paul says, we conform, not to the image of the world, but we conform to the image of Christ. (Rom 12.1)

And the way we do that is we make the Church's words our words. We make the Church's prayers our prayers. And we fill our hearts and our minds with these things. And in this way we begin to understand God's ways. And if we don't understand, we are more at ease with that.

In other words we don't buck against what God is trying to do in our lives. So, this great feast of Pentecost where we see the Holy Spirit descending in tongues of fire upon the apostles and upon the Church, bringing the good news to the whole world is a wonderful gift that we have... that each of us have... to experience in our own lives.

Where the ways that we don't understand, the way that things have happened, the difficult things for us, when we acquire the Holy Spirit, are revealed as the means of salvation in our own life

All that has happened to us is revealed as salvation for us... as a way for us to unite with God through His Holy Spirit.

So, may we, as we seek to acquire the Holy Spirit, continue heartedly and fervently with faith and with courage, to continue to try to be a vessel that can be filled with, and transformed by, the Holy Spirit of God. In the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.