

Birkenhead, Sunday 28th May 2023

Pentecost

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

In Jerusalem, 2000 years ago, the Holy Ghost came upon the Apostles and Our Lady, under the veil of “tongues of fire,”¹ to give them the immense grace of the Confirmation. This transformed them forever, and from the place they were hiding in, they came forward to preach the Gospel. This transformation was not only visible in their attitude, but also in their doctrine, as they were given a special and personal charism of infallibility.

They also suspended the confusion we inherited from Babel: no one could understand each other anymore, as the Lord confounded their tongue,² and “scattered them from that place into all lands.”³ But on that day of the first Pentecost, when St Peter started his speech to the multitude of the pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem for the annual celebration of the Feast of Weeks, everyone could hear “them speaking in his own language.”⁴

This is a miracle of Faith, and the Church continues to preach that same unity, found again on that very day, with the continuous same doctrine and liturgy, inherited from that age, and enhanced by the explanations of the Holy Doctors all along its history.

Pentecost is the day the Church appeared visible for the first time. It was born from the pierced side of Jesus on the Mount Calvary, and the gift of the Holy Ghost was the final touch to give the New Covenant the publicity and universality.

Today, the confusion, inherited from Babel’s tower, was suspended, and all people of all nations, who wanted to listen and serve Christ, were granted the grace to understand each other, not only with the same language of men, which, unless with a special gift, remain difficult to overcome, but because of the unity in charity.

These tongues of fire, St Luke is mentioning in the excerpt of the Acts of the Apostles we just read, may have a double signification for us: the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which “are habits whereby man is perfected to obey readily the Holy Ghost,”⁵ and a reminder of this burning fire of Charity, virtue which bonds all the others, and that we received from the Sacred Heart himself.

The common language we are speaking of is not only a convention between men to understand each other with a national language, English, French, German or Spanish, but a real life of Charity, lived together within a community of desires and actions, to always serve the Lord according to His Divine Will, which is to live in perfect harmony, moved by the Divine Charity and enhanced by the motions of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

St Therese of the Child Jesus understood in better words I could even express myself how this charity should be lived within a community. We know how hard sometimes it could be to go over slight differences between characters, and to see more Jesus than the upsetting person

¹ Acts, II, 3.

² Gen., XI, 7.

³ Gen., XI, 8.

⁴ Acts, II, 6.

⁵ St Thomas, Ia IIae, Q. 68, art 3, concl.

who is going against our own will again. Let's disappear in humility, to practice charity, following the good words of the Little Flower:

“Yes, I know when I show charity to others, it is simply Jesus acting in me, and the more closely I am united to Him, the more dearly I love my Sisters. If I wish to increase this love in my heart, and the devil tries to bring before me the defects of a Sister, I hasten to look for her virtues, her good motives; I call to mind that though I may have seen her fall once, no doubt she has gained many victories over herself, which in her humility she conceals. It is even possible that what seems to me a fault, may very likely, on account of her good intention, be an act of virtue. I have no difficulty in persuading myself of this, because I have had the same experience.”⁶

The virtue of Charity we are celebrating today through the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles and Our Lady is the gift Jesus was talking about to the Samaritan woman. He is the fire that consumes in us the stain and rust of sin, that melts the ice of our hearts and kindles in them the pure flame of divine love.

From today, following the example of the Apostles, and the Saints, let's live with the Charity of the Holy Ghost, obeying with promptitude and generosity to the request of Our Lord Jesus Christ:

“That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.”⁷

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

⁶ St Therese of the Child Jesus, MsC, 12v/13r.

⁷ Jn, XIII, 34-35.