

Reflection for the Solemnity of Pentecost, Cycles A, B & C (John 14 option)

The lectionary translation of the readings for this Sunday can be found at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/060825-Vigil.cfm>

1st Reading: *Acts 2:1-11*

Today's first reading is the well-known description, from Acts of the Apostles, of the birth of the Church with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the preaching to all peoples that results from the power of the Spirit. In the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles, "witnessing" is the message.

2nd Reading: *1 Cor 12:3-7; 12-13*

Our 2nd reading is a small selection from a much longer speech by Paul about the work of the Spirit in the Church. In the larger selection he tells how all of us should open ourselves to the work of the Spirit in us for the benefit of the mission of the Church.

Gospel: *Jn 14:15-16, 23b-26*

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth... he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you." Jn 14:15-26

Setting and parallels:

This reading is taken selectively from what are called The Last Supper Discourses in John's Gospel. They occur after Judas has left. There are no clear parallels in the synoptic Gospels.

Verse by Verse:

Jn 14:16 "...he will give you another Advocate..." | Advocate is a translation of the Greek word *parakletos*. John does not use it in the sense of someone who stands by you or as a defense attorney. John sees the Advocate as a teacher, a witness to Jesus and a prosecutor of the world. (UBSH) The UBS handbook also accepts the translation "helper" as appropriate.

Jn 14:17 "the Spirit of truth..." | This is not in today's Gospel selection but finishes vs 16. It seems important to understanding the Spirit. The Greek is literally, "the Spirit of the truth." This is more than intellectual truth. It is a characteristic of the person of the Holy Spirit. It is also in the person of Jesus Christ; "...the father's only son, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14) and "I am the way and the truth and the life." (Jn 14:6). It is the type of truth that we know and feel even though we may not be able to explain it. It is the result of experiencing the truth as the remainder of vs 17 points out; "... you know it because it remains with you and will be in you." (Jn 14:17).

Jn 14:23b "...We will come to him..." | Usually when we think of the coming of Jesus after his death, resurrection and ascension, we think of his coming on the clouds at the end of time as in the end times discussion in Lk 21:27 and the ascension story of Acts 1:11. Although Matthew doesn't have an ascension story, when Jesus commissions the disciples he says "I am with you till the end of the

age". He seems to have been talking about being with us corporately rather than individually. In John, Jesus will come to us individually in the present life with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jn 14:23b "...and make our dwelling with him." | This is similar to the Exodus story when God dwelled in a tent with the Israelites who were freed from slavery. It is like Ruth in the Hebrew Scriptures who stayed with Naomi. It is like Lot who threw his lot in with Abram. It is like the communion of life & love in marriage. Here God throws his lot in with us but, also, our lot is thrown in with God.

Jn 14:26 "...he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you." | I take this to mean that the Spirit will complete Jesus' teaching about the true way to live life which leads to the fullness of life. Jn 16:12-13 seems to coincide with this; "I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth."

What the 1st hearers heard:

Being as these were Jesus disciples who were learning "the Way" through him, I'm sure they heard that someone, the Spirit, would continue the process and bring it to completion.

What would change if our community really heard this Gospel?

We would want the process to be brought to completion in us.

What is the good news in this Gospel?

The Spirit will guide us in this life to the fullness of life.

Gospel Reflection

Insight from the Holy Spirit

I have a friend who has been through a lot in his life. His spouse was an active alcoholic and he lived in the chaos that was brought about. Bad things just seemed to happen to him. One thing I learned from him was his prayer concerning those difficult things. It was, "Lord help me know what I am supposed to learn from this." It is a perfect prayer if you are trying to let your life be guided by the Holy Spirit, as this Gospel suggests.

And, this type of prayer can be used for anything. I use it when preparing my homilies to find the little stories I use to illustrate my point. I read the readings for the day and ask myself a couple of questions to determine what the theme should be. Then I prayerfully hold that theme in my heart for several days waiting for the Spirit to suggest a little story. Sometimes it works really well.

This method can also be used to reflect on something you heard in one of the readings at Mass, or the homily. It can be used to reflect on something someone said to you, good or bad. You know... like when you think "What was that about?" Whenever something claims its own place in your awareness, hold it in your heart and pray, "What are you trying to tell me, Lord?" Hold on to it while your spirit, working with the Holy Spirit, tries to raise the meaning to your awareness. When it makes sense to you, you've achieved what we call "insight".

Insight is a deeper type of seeing that results from leading a reflective life. It's the type of sight that includes the significance of what was seen. To be sure, it is not about mentally figuring it out. It is about practicing a type of silence that allows your spirit and the Holy Spirit to communicate with you. Insight doesn't come from our minds. It comes from the depths of our beings, our soul.

There are several books that discuss different aspects of this process. They would give you an intellectual idea but I think it would be better to just use my friend's prayer as an example and try it. It simply involves paying attention to your life. Pay attention particularly to the things that claim a place of significance in your heart, however fleeting that might seem. Prayerfully hold on to those things. Hold them in your consciousness, and prayerfully wait for insight to come along. You'll know when it has. Thank the Lord and ask for the courage to take action on the prompting of his Spirit.

I truly believe this is how the Holy Spirit, working with our spirit, will teach us everything, remind us of all Jesus said (Jn 14:26) and lead us to all truth (Jn 16:13). The result is a much richer and calmer life. Who doesn't want that?

God bless...

Personal Reflection:

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth... he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you." Jn 14:15-26

Question:

What words or phrases attracted your attention during the Liturgy of the Word on Sunday? What connection do those words or phrases have to your day-to-day life? (Why do you think they attracted your attention?) What might God be trying to say to you through these words or phrases? What response should you make? What action should you take?

Alternative:

Share about/Reflect upon a time when you had a "learning experience". What did you learn? What was the process of learning from that experience? Did you learn what God wanted you to learn? How has learning that changed your life? What can you do to increase the frequency of learning experiences in your life?