



Stewardship

→ *in Motion*

May 2006

The Holy Power and Promise of Pentecost

The word 'Pentecost' comes from the Greek; it simply means 'fiftieth'. Pentecost Sunday ends the season of Easter; it is the Sabbath day after a week's worth of weeks ($7 \times 7 = 49$). Pentecost grew from what was originally a festival marking the first grain harvest of the Middle Eastern year, marked by a sacrifice to the gods from the first part of that first harvest. In very ancient Palestine, this first-fruit sacrifice was tightly tied into the religions of the gods of power and fertility. As the Jews grew to understand themselves as followers of the one and only true God, they created ways to be thankful to God for the first harvest, without the pagan trappings. The celebration became a mini-pilgrimage where they would bring grain loaves and young livestock for sacrifices.

Over the centuries, the Jewish kings started to centralize religious activity into Jerusalem and the pilgrimage and sacrifice was brought there, with all the songs, processions, liturgies and pageantry that Jerusalem did so well. To them, the 50-day period was the week's worth of weeks after the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover recalled hard times and rescue by God, hence the unleavened bread. Pentecost was the celebration of a blessing of harvest, and its joy was symbolized by leavening the bread.

In the New Testament, as Luke reports it, the believers had gathered together after Jesus ascended to Heaven and returned to the Father. Not just the 12 disciples, but about 120 of them. They were talking, remembering, praying, wondering what was next. They had just been through several of the strangest months there ever were. On the morning of Pentecost, they came out of the room, and started telling the people they met about Jesus, lit up by the Holy Spirit. The streets were full of people from many places, mostly there for the holy day, some still hanging around from Passover. When each of them heard the witnesses speak, they heard it in their own

language! That is, if they were allowing themselves to listen; otherwise, they heard babbling, as shown by the remarks about drunkenness. What was being told, for the first time in full form, was the good news of Jesus and what it means for all people. But more than words: the words were being carried with power and authority by the Holy Spirit into the ears and the hearts of those who were listening. About 3000 new people joined their ranks. This is the first fruits of a new kind of harvest, and the giving of a new covenant of grace that fulfills the covenant of the Old Testament promises to God's people. This season, claim the power and the promise of Pentecost for your life!

A Question for all Graduates



Many youth in the parish will graduate from high school or college during May and June. A question for all the graduates is: "Quo Vadis?" Where are you going? The obvious answer is that you are going the same

direction you were before graduation. A cap and gown doesn't make any real difference in you. There are only two directions for life and two destinations. The way to Heaven is the way of love, the way of learning to care about others and about God. Love is the greatest thing in the world for "God is love." The way to hell has both an express route and a longer, slower way. The express route is selfishness. The slower route is indifference, but it gets you to the same place. We wish every graduate Godspeed in the *right* direction!

A Wedding Gift of Love



How do we express love for our children? Some people give them money and buy them expensive things. Others allow

the children to do as they please, believing it bad to repress their desire. The following wedding story is a wonderful example of love.

Some time ago a beautiful girl was to be married. Both her father and mother were deaf and unable to speak. They wanted so much to give their daughter a lovely wedding. They practiced walking. They provided interpreters. All arrangements were made just right. But there is the grand climax of it all.

This father who could not speak practiced a year-and-a-half so he could say "I...do..." when his daughter was given away. He did it and did it well. This is a rare kind of love. If it takes real love to make a wholesome personality (and it does), then we can all understand why this girl with the handicapped parents is so fortunate.

Give your children your love, however you can express it, and you will have given them the most precious gift of all!

It Takes Courage

To refrain from gossip when other about you delight in it.

To stand up for the absent person who is being abused.

To live honestly within your means and not dishonestly on the means of others.

To be a real man, a real true woman, by holding fast to your ideals when it causes you to be looked upon as strange and peculiar.

To be talked about and remain silent when a word would justify you in the eyes of others but which you cannot speak without injury to another.

To refuse to do a thing which is wrong though others do it.

To live according to your own convictions.

To dress according to your income and to deny yourself what you cannot afford to buy.

Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble before others, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.

—Deuteronomy 31:6



*May angels
guide your
journey today
and always.*