

When the
Day of Pentacost
had come, they were all
together
in one place.
And suddenly...

ACTS 2:1



Monthly Reflection:

May 2023

As we prepare for Pentecost, this verse invites us to ponder on the power and possibility of the reality called togetherness. The disciples were all together in one place as the Lord had specifically told them. They were to be together in the city until they were clothed with power from on high (Lk 24:49). Grace needs to meet obedience for the miracle to happen! As we meditate on the powerful miracle of Pentecost that gave birth to the Church and empowered those present to be his audacious witnesses, let us be aware of the need for the fire of the Spirit to get the dry sticks of the disciples to be bundled together.

If we carefully observe the Scriptures, we see the Lord guiding us toward unity, communion and togetherness since we were created precisely to share in His divine life as a communion of love. "Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness." (Gen. 1:26). This Trinitarian unity is revealed at our Lord's Baptism (Mt. 3:16-17), He gives the call to an inseparable 'one flesh' union of husband and wife, which was so from the 'beginning' (Mt 19:6), the command to unconditional forgiveness (Mt. 18:22), and makes us aware of our communion in teaching us to cry out "Abba Father" (Mt. 6:9-13, Gal. 4:6). This is a recurring theme that we encounter ever so often. Unity is the fertile soil for God's presence (Mt 18:20) and workings. "How good and how pleasant it is, when brothers dwell together as one!" (Ps. 133:1).

The disciples were together when Jesus appeared to them after the resurrection and breathed the Holy Spirit on them (Jn 20:19-23). On Pentecost, they were all together and in one place, receiving the Promise of the Father. Togetherness or synodality is the way of life of believers (Acts 2:44-47). This togetherness of the people of God makes Pentecost possible and in turn, the experience of Pentecost strengthens this togetherness in our movement. Pope Benedict describes ecclesial movements as homes where people can find an atmosphere appropriate to the family of God. Our Jesus Youth communities, clothed with this unity and receptivity, are lampstands from which the Holy Spirit's great light is given to all. This is the beauty that primarily attracted many of us to the movement. But as Pope Francis recently said, "this cannot be a uniform, homogenizing unity but on the contrary, it must be a unity that respects and values the singularities, the particularities of the peoples and cultures that comprise it, especially as we expand to new cultures and generations."

However, there exists a possibility that this communion in the Spirit can wither as the movement grows, expands and gets recognized. We need to examine if our reliance on God and journey together is being undermined by our past experiences, self-reliance, egocentricity, and ways of being and doing. For the temptation to drift into the land of Shinar (Gen. 11) is real! Thinking that we can ascend to heaven by our own strength, we could build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, or pursue making a name for ourselves, all the while with good intentions ("lest we be scattered" v. 4). All our efforts to build up something at the expense of true love and concern for our brothers and sisters, or the glory of God are bound to fail. Let us thank God for His merciful interventions that curbed our towering pride when many of our initiatives stalled or failed!

Let us also ponder on the two visible signs of Pentecost: 'tongue' and 'speech' (Act 2:3-4). Fiery tongue and speech are powerful and can cut as well as heal hearts. It is the source of that fire that matters here, "for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks" (Lk. 6:45) This Pentecost let us desire a new tongue, a new speech, that affirms and appreciates, that blesses and upholds. For this to happen in our lives, grace needs to meet obedience. God ordains Pentecost but we need to prepare and wait, to respond to His initiative. We need to remain together in Jerusalem, along with Mary who helps us. Then as we humbly wait in mutual love, 'And suddenly...' will be experienced in our lives too! A sudden move of the Spirit that consumes and intoxicates! That charges each one of us with a new found anointing for daring witness!

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