

For Sunday, May 20, 2018

## An Era of Change

Pentecost Sunday  
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/052018-mass-during-day.cfm>

Acts 2:1-11

1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Gal 5:16-25

Jn 20:19-23 or Jn 15:26-27; 16:12-15

It is amazing to consider how dramatically life changed for Jesus' disciples and other followers and for witnesses of his resurrection. Pentecost brought about huge transformations: fear into courage, disbelief into belief, apathy into zeal, and maintenance into mission! Traveling outward into the world of the unfamiliar and sometimes hostile, the disciples set sail to proclaim the Good News to new people and new places. Their lives gave witness to many things, but one in particular became a huge game changer.

A true and real encounter with the Trinitarian God —

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — dramatically changed everything, including how they perceived God (in all His revealed fullness), one another, themselves, and creation. I wouldn't even be surprised if the flowers they gazed upon on their travels had a new energy and presence they never experienced before.

They finally understood that everything was imbued with God's life and love. Assured of the help and advocacy of the Holy Spirit and inspired by zealous folks like St. Paul, these early vibrant Christian communities flourished and embraced their new life. It is no wonder that St. Paul in all of his wisdom reminds the church at Galatia that there are certain self-focused behaviors that cannot exist if they truly belong to Christ. *"Immorality, impurity, lust, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies and the like"* are incapable with a belief in Jesus Christ.

In Christ, all of our relationships have changed! We have been liberated from ourselves and are asked to live our lives in service of others. It's not just about receiving and entertaining our desires, but it is about living lives in self donation to others. The preaching of the Good News is about embracing the dynamic of giving and receiving that is now part of our relationships, making them properly ordered and understood. All of the fruits of the Spirit that are specified by St. Paul serve this very end and purpose. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are all virtues intended to enhance and deepen our relationships. We are meant to open ourselves to others. In giving ourselves to others, we receive new life in return. God's Kingdom is a kingdom of right relationships!

Many things in our world are changing. How we conduct the business of our lives, the priorities we establish, the amount of demands placed upon us, our understanding of human nature and science, and even our Church are all evolving. Very little is the way "it used to be," and we are being asked to do things differently.



All of this change can certainly make us a little more self-absorbed, but let's face it, we all like to protect our "backyards" and preserve the familiar. Is all of this change good? Time will eventually reveal that answer. But, regardless of what caused the change, of whether we can affect it, or even if our opinion about how things can be or "ought to be" even matters, we have to keep focused on Christ.

All of the fruits of the Spirit can lead to unity, and it is in unity that we — the contemporary disciples of Christ — find strength. Dissentions, factions, hatred, and rivalry have no place in any community let alone one that calls itself Christian. In fact, they will swiftly lead to our demise. We may not agree with where the world and Church are going, but we are asked to preach the Good News to new people and to help them understand what is needed in order to nurture healthy, properly ordered relationships. The first disciples really did not know where they were going. They just went. Our time is not so dissimilar. With the Holy Spirit as our guide, we can become who we need to be and who God wants us to be, and we can tend to the needs of all of our brothers and sisters as is their right and dignity.

As St. Paul also tells us, "*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal 2:20). Our old selves, as noble as they may have been, have been crucified. We now live in the person of Christ. Alleluia!

*Rev. Mark Suslenko*

## PRAYER

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time;  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
trusting that He will make all things right  
if I surrender to His Will;  
that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with Him  
forever in the next.  
Amen.

—The Serenity Prayer

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