

Sunday Message

PENTECOST SUNDAY

THE WORD

Year A • 28 May 2023 • Psalter Week 4

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

JOHN 20:19-23

Some years ago, Pope Francis revealed he was wearing a cross that had belonged to an Iraqi priest slain for his faith.

"It is a cross this priest had in his hands when he was stabbed for refusing to renounce Jesus Christ," the pope told a gathering of young monks and nuns. "This cross, I wear it here," he added, indicating his chest. "Today, we have more martyrs than in the first centuries (after Christ)."

Martyrs like that Iraqi priest choose to die rather than renounce their Christian faith. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they are happy to suffer for their faith. The Spirit gives them the courage to witness to it, even unto death.

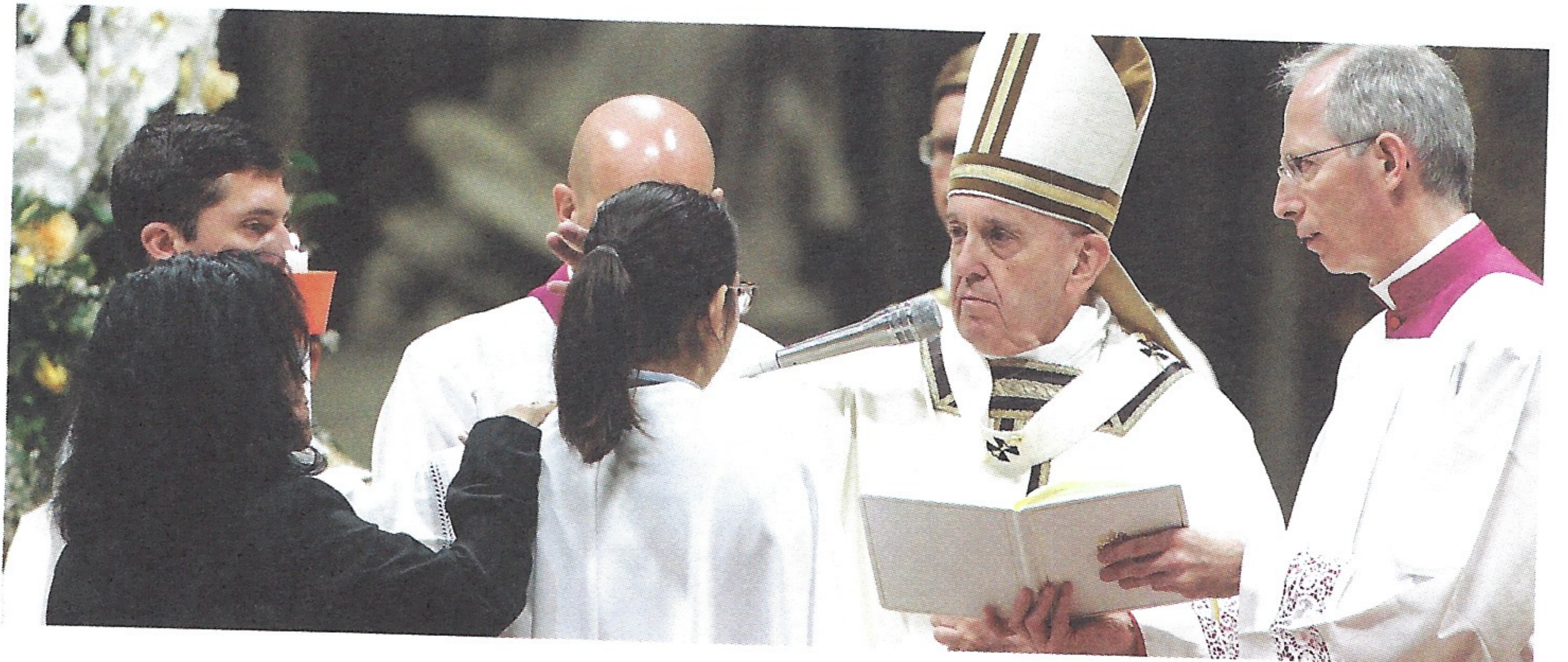
We don't face the same risks as Christians in other parts of the world, but all Christians — no matter where we live — are called to witness to the faith by virtue of our baptism. Our baptism is strengthened by the sacrament of confirmation, which the Catechism of the Catholic Church says "gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross."

We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at confirmation. That same Spirit that was poured out on the apostles at Pentecost, and that was poured out on that Iraqi martyr, is given to us, too. The Spirit gives us the courage to witness to the faith, whatever the cost.

After the passion and death of Jesus, the apostles cowered behind locked doors, full of fear. Their fear had cut them off from the world. Then, Jesus appeared in their midst, and their fear turned to joy.

Jesus breathed on them, breathed the breath of God on them, filled them with his life, with God's life — with confidence, hope, conviction, power. They became new people, ready to proclaim God's message to the ends of the earth, even to give up their lives for it.

That's what Jesus commissioned his followers to do before he left them, and what he asks of us, too. Filled with the Holy Spirit, we are to be his witnesses in our time and place. ■



REFLECT

At Pentecost, the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit and, with it, the gift of tongues. What was that gift? Was it that they were suddenly able to speak everything from Swahili to Swedish? Or was it something different?

What they were given at Pentecost was the ability to communicate in a new language — the language of the Holy Spirit, the language of love, a language that transcends any barrier of race, tongue, or nationality. We don't need to be polyglots to speak the language of Pentecost. What we need instead are several gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The first is courage. The apostles had been full of fear since the events of Holy Week. But upon receiving the Holy Spirit, they become new people. They go out into the streets, unafraid to preach the Good News.

That's the first thing people noticed — their courage. Eventually, those same disciples would give their lives for the Gospel.

We also have received that same gift. Courage is the language we are called to speak.

The second gift is joy. The change in the apostles after Pentecost was obvious.

They became joyful people. They knew God loved them, and the Holy Spirit was with them, so nothing could get them down. No matter what obstacles they faced, they were filled with the Spirit of joy — and people noticed.

It's a gift we have been given too, and that we must use. If we truly believe what we say we believe, then we must let it shine through — even in the face of church scandals, economic difficulties, and personal or family setbacks. There is no greater contradiction of our faith than to be dour, angry, or unsmiling. Joy is the language we are called to speak.

The third is love. Love was the defining characteristic of the first followers of Jesus. It's what outsiders noticed about them and what attracted outsiders to them. Their unconditional love showed itself especially in compassion and service to those who were poor.

It's a gift we have been given too, and that we must use. It's easy to talk about love; practising it is far more challenging. Love is the language we are called to speak.

When we speak the Spirit-filled language of courage, joy, and love, we become a mini Pentecost. ■

SAY

Repeat the response from today's psalm: "Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth."

LEARN

Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. It is the day we celebrate the beginning of the Church's mission, the birth of a new community.

DO

Recall your confirmation day. Thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Spirit to help you speak the language of courage, joy, and love.

PRAY

In the second reading, St Paul reminds us that there are many ways in which we can serve God. Ask the Lord to help you make the best use of your gifts.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world
and that which contains all things
understands what is said, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who by the mystery of today's great feast
sanctify your whole Church in every people
and nation,
pour out, we pray, the gifts of the Holy Spirit
across the face of the earth
and, with the divine grace that was at work
when the Gospel was first proclaimed,
fill now once more the hearts of believers.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 2:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

When Pentecost day came round, the apostles
had all met in one room, when suddenly they
heard what sounded like a powerful wind
from heaven, the noise of which filled the
entire house in which they were sitting; and
something appeared to them that seemed like
tongues of fire; these separated and came to
rest on the head of each of them. They were
all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to
speak foreign languages as the Spirit gave
them the gift of speech.

Now there were devout men living in
Jerusalem from every nation under heaven,
and at this sound they all assembled, each
one bewildered to hear these men speaking
his own language. They were amazed and
astonished. "Surely" they said "all these
men speaking are Galileans? How does it
happen that each of us hears them in his
own native language? Parthians, Medes and
Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea
and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia
and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya
round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome
– Jews and proselytes alike – Cretans and
Arabs; we hear them preaching in our own
language about the marvels of God."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 103

Response:

Send forth your Spirit, O Lord,
and renew the face of the earth.

Or Alleluia!

1. Bless the Lord, my soul!
Lord God, how great you are.
How many are your works, O Lord!
The earth is full of your riches. (R.)
2. You take back your spirit, they die,
returning to the dust from which they
came.
You send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the earth. (R.)
3. May the glory of the Lord last for ever!
May the Lord rejoice in his works!
May my thoughts be pleasing to him.
I find my joy in the Lord. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 12:3-7.12-13

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Corinthians.

No one can say, "Jesus is Lord" unless he is
under the influence of the Holy Spirit. There
is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit;
there are all sorts of service to be done, but
always to the same Lord; working in all sorts
of different ways in different people, it is the
same God who is working in all of them. The
particular way in which the Spirit is given to
each person is for a good purpose.

Just as a human body, though it is made
up of many parts, is a single unit because all
these parts, though many, make one body, so
it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all
baptised, Jews as well Greeks, slaves as well
as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all
to drink.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

*The sequence Veni Sancte Spiritus (Holy
Spirit, Lord of Light) may be said or sung.*

PENTECOST SEQUENCE

Holy Spirit, Lord of Light,
From the clear celestial height
Thy pure beaming radiance give.
Come, thou Father of the poor,
Come with treasures which endure;
Come, thou light of all that live!

Thou, of all consolers best,
Thou, the soul's delightful guest,
Dost refreshing peace bestow;

Thou in toil art comfort sweet;
Pleasant coolness in the heat;
Solace in the midst of woe.

Light immortal, light divine,
Visit thou these hearts of thine,
And our inmost being fill:

If thou take thy grace away,
Nothing pure in man will stay;
All his good is turned to ill.

Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour thy dew;
Wash the stains of guilt away:

Bend the stubborn heart and will;
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;
Guide the steps that go astray.

Thou, on us who evermore
Thee confess and thee adore,
With thy sevenfold gifts descend:

Give us comfort when we die;
Give us life with thee on high;
Give us joys that never end.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your
faithful,
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 20:19-23

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

In the evening of the first day of the week,
the doors were closed in the room where the
disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus
came and stood among them. He said to
them, "Peace be with you," and showed
them his hands and his side. The disciples
were filled with joy when they saw the Lord,
and he said to them again, "Peace be with
you."

"As the Father sent me,
so am I sending you."

After saying this he breathed on them and
said:

"Receive the Holy Spirit.
For those whose sins you forgive,
they are forgiven;
for those whose sins you retain,
they are retained."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant, we pray, O Lord,
that, as promised by your Son,
the Holy Spirit may reveal to us more
abundantly
the hidden mystery of this sacrifice
and graciously lead us into all truth.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and spoke of the marvels of God, alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, who bestow heavenly gifts upon your
Church,
safeguard, we pray, the grace you have given,
that the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out upon
her
may retain all its force
and that this spiritual food
may gain her abundance of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.