

PENTECOST – 2010

May 23, 2010

Today we celebrate Pentecost, as we turn our attention to the Holy Spirit - that person of the Holy Trinity who we don't seem to give much attention to the rest of the year...even though the Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who can have the greatest effect on how we live our lives...The other day as I was working on today's homily, something hit me that I hadn't thought of before...& it's this: Jesus never asked us to be NORMAL...He doesn't want us to be like everyone else...He wants us to be NUTS!...Now some of us are way ahead of the game...But I'm not talking about that kind of nuts...Jesus wants us to be NUTS with the Holy Spirit. ...What does this mean?...(*hold up sign*)... N-U-T-S... Never Underestimate The Spirit...Jesus wants us to Never Underestimate The Spirit's power...that Holy Spirit power that Jesus breathed on His disciples when He appeared to them after His resurrection...The same Holy Spirit power that came upon those 1st disciples on that Pentecost Sunday 2000 years ago after Jesus had left them & ascended into heaven. ...As they waited & prayed as Jesus had told them to do,.. the Holy Spirit He promised to send them burst into the house as a sudden blast of wind & flaming tongues of fire...And then, NUTS with the Holy Spirit, filled with Holy Spirit power, those weak, scared disciples overcame their fears, faults & failings & went out & spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth...Tony Evans, a dynamic black preacher & writer puts it this way: "The role of the Holy Spirit is the indispensable factor in whether you win or lose, are a success or failure, at living the Christian life."...If we don't tap into the Holy Spirit power, we can't live an authentic life in Christ...That's the message I want us to take hold of as we celebrate Pentecost.

When Jesus was getting ready to leave them, He told His disciples, "I am leaving you now, but I'm going to send you a helper – someone who is going to be there for you no matter what your problem is,...no matter what your circumstance is,...no matter what your frustration or irritation or need is...no matter what you are up against...And this helper – the Holy Spirit – will be with you **& within you.** " ...Yes, Jesus said that...As old Yankee manager Casey Stengel would say, "You can look it up!"... The Holy Spirit will be within you...Inside you...St. Paul. says the same thing in our 2nd reading...His words can be boiled down to this: "When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord & Savior, the Holy Spirit will dwell in us & will work in us... if we yield to the Spirit." (*those last words are very important... back to them later*)...At our Baptism we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord & Savior – or our parents & godparents did for us...At our Confirmation, we confirm our belief in Jesus Christ as our Lord & Savior ...& the Bishop anoints us with the words, "Be sealed with the Holy Spirit."...And so the Holy Spirit comes to us...The Spirit takes up residence in us...& is there for us... to guide us...to look out for our well-being...to lead us to all truth...& remind us of everything that Jesus said. ...That's in the Bible, too. You can look it up.

Now I have a serious question for you ...If you had a big problem or a tough decision to make & Jesus was physically standing right here (*point to the left*), & I was standing over here (*point to the right*),...& I said, "Come up here & I'll help you,"...& Jesus said, "Come to me & I will help you."...Who would you go to?...Don't worry, you won't hurt my feelings, because I'm gonna be over there too!...Wouldn't it be great if we could have Jesus right here,...to turn to whenever we need help...like those 1st disciples did?...Well, it's not far from how it really is. ...because He left us a helper that is closer to you than anybody else could be...If you are a true believer, the Holy Spirit RESIDES in YOU...is always there...is INSIDE YOU...We need to remember the Holy Spirit is the 3rd person of the Holy Trinity...The Father, Son, & Holy Spirit are one & the same God...Each of them is fully God – no one of them more God than the others...So when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, it's as if He were saying, "The helper I'm sending you will be all that I was to you...You're not getting 3rd class help. ...You're getting exactly what I would give you if I

were there."....So, when we call on the Holy Spirit for help, it's as if we are calling on Jesus Christ standing right here...We're not getting less than if He were right here.

In 1Cor 6, Paul says to the believers in Corinth, "Your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit." ...That's right! He said our bodies are sacred housings for the Holy Spirit...That's what he said....You can look it up....The Holy Spirit has a home in us. Yet so often we treat Him like an uninvited visitor...We totally ignore Him & act as if He wasn't there. ...We fail to draw on the Holy Spirit power...We fail to be NUTS with the Holy Spirit...as Jesus intended us to be...We fail to use this powerful gift that's been given to us...Let me illustrate with a little parable...You may have heard me use it before, ...but it's worth hearing again.

It's about a church congregation made up of geese: ...It was at their Sunday morning service, & the pastor waddled up to the pulpit & began his sermon.

"What kind of birds are we?" he asked the congregation...."Geese!" they answered.

"That's right!" the pastor shot back. "We are geese!...God made us geese,...not ducks or sparrows or crows." ... "AMEN!" the people shouted, "You said it, pastor!"...as they honked their approval.

"And what are these things God has given us, these MAJESTIC appendages?" ... "Wings!" they answered.

"And why did God give us these fine wings?" ... "To fly, pastor! We can fly with them!" .

..

Now the preacher really started to heat up...."God WANTS us to fly. The moles can dig, the lions can hunt, but WE can fly!... We can soar above the clouds! We can fill the skies. Praise the Lord! We can fly!"

...Then the pastor challenged his flock. "If God wants us to fly, then what do we gotta do?"....."We gotta fly!" they yelled back ... "We gotta what?" "We gotta fly!".... "What?"..."FLY!"

When the service was over as the congregation of geese were leaving the church, ...they remarked to one another how very inspiring the pastor's sermon had been that morning....& THEN.....they all WALKED home....They all WALKED home. ...

You see, God had given that church full of geese the gift of wings, the power to fly... But there they were, walking...not flying...waddling along when they could have been soaring above the clouds. ...We are often like those geese; we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit...the power of the Holy Spirit. with us ...inside us...& we DON'T USE IT...We settle for walking, when we could be flying! And believe me, ...I'm as guilty of this as anyone...Now, I'd like you all to please stand up if you can...& take a look at the people around you...(pause) Ok, you can sit back down...The people you saw look like they're doing ok, right?...But I'll bet most of them are having a tough time dealing with something in their lives. ...Maybe it's an illness...or disability.maybe a relationship...They could be feeling unloved, unappreciated, betrayed...Maybe they're finding it hard to forgive a hurt...It could be a battle with an addiction, ...or a struggle with temptation. ...Maybe it's fear of what's ahead or of making the wrong decision...It could be a troubled child...or an abusive parent...or a slew of other things that can beat us down when we try to handle them on our own. ...And that's what we try to do, isn't it...because we want to be in control, don't we?...

But Jesus wants us to be like those 1st disciples...who let the Holy Spirit take over...who let the Holy Spirit power work in them & through them to do what they never thought they could without Jesus there with them...When we let the Holy Spirit take over,...when we call on the power of the Holy Spirit that is lying dormant within us,...when we go NUTS with the Holy Spirit,...amaz-

ing things happen:...Down & discouraged folks cheer up...narrow-minded folks open up...unforgiving folks make up...sour folks sweeten up...gossipers shut up...bad habits are broken...barriers are broken...spirits are healed...relationships are healed...fears are calmed...tempers are calmed. But most of all, the Holy Spirit power will help us to act not out of our emotions & feelings, ...but out of our commitment to try and be all Jesus taught us & showed us to be.

And so, my friends, if we only say one prayer each day, let it be a prayer to the Holy Spirit as soon as we awake in the morning: Holy Spirit, please be with me today, remain in me,...work in me & through me...so that every thought I think,...every word I speak,...every decision I make, ...everything I do today...is done out of my desire to be as much like Jesus as I can be. AMEN!