

PENTECOST 2022 (II)

John 20:19-23

Peace, Breath, Forgiveness.

This Pentecost passage mentions three things that Jesus gives the disciples after his resurrection: first, He gives them his *peace*, twice! Then Jesus *breathes* on them and give them the *Holy Spirit*. The third is interesting, Jesus give them permission to *forgive sins* or to withhold them.

Peace must be the most important since he gives his peace twice, and with the second time, Jesus commissions them *to go forth*, don't hang around. He uses the word, "apestalke," to send forth, from which our word apostle comes from. Why is this peace so important that we even incorporate the Kiss of Peace into our Liturgy? Without peace in their hearts, they will never leave the upper room where they have locked themselves in. They were too frightened. The gospel states that right at the beginning, "The doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews," *for fear!*

What are we afraid of, what keeps us from telling others the Good News? What keeps us from *living* the Good News in our daily lives? What do we need to get us moving, like the apostles, for fear of whatever keeps us home-bound? Probably the Holy Spirit, because Jesus then breathes on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

In John's Gospel, he keeps sending us back to the Beginning of the book of Genesis where the Spirit of God moved over the waters, Jesus breathes on them. Especially at the beginning of John's Gospel he again sends the reader back to the beginning of Genesis, "In the beginning was the Word," and more importantly with the creation of Adam, "The Lord God...blew into his nostrils the breath of live, and so man became a living being."

What connection is John trying to make with this post-resurrection scene? I hope it is obvious, Jesus, as in Genesis, is breathing new life into his disciples after giving them peace to settle their inner chaos. This is a new creation for a new beginning, and for John, it is at a higher or spiritual level. Thus, his disciples received the *eternal life* promised so often in this gospel. Thus, Jesus baptized them with the Holy Spirit by breathing on them new life.

That brings us to the third gift, "The forgiveness of sins or the withholding of forgiveness." The gospel brings division: it is for the rise and fall of many. The man born blind received his sight, but the authorities who refused to believe, were confirmed in their darkness. This Paraclete was the Spirit of Truth. The Paraclete would be their teacher and would testify on behalf of Jesus. The Spirit would come from Jesus to prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and Judgment.

Peace, Breath, Forgiveness.

Something is missing, but what? Our own hearts need to be set on fire with the Holy Spirit. In the gospel story on the Road to Emmaus, the two disciples mentioned how their hearts burned when Jesus explained the scriptures to them. It is this burning that comes from understanding the Scriptures after studying and reflecting on the Word of God. But then we need action, we need to put into practice what we have read. The first thing the two disciples of Emmaus did was return to Jerusalem and report to the others that they had seen Jesus in the breaking of the bread, the Eucharist.

With the celebration of Pentecost, we also are sent forth to serve the Lord. Here at Saint Francis de Sales, we are blessed with many ministries, but most importantly, there is need for ministers here at the Eucharist. Several times I have celebrated without servers. Several times I have almost needed to call for distributors of the Bread or the Wine. Looking at the list of readers, we see blanks every week. Fortunately, there are the same volunteers who come forward. We need ushers or greeters, like Dolores, who is a greeter at the 11 am Mass, but at the side entrance. We need cleaners and wedding hosts, members to sit on the Parish Council, and so forth. I hope you are not the one who sits back and lets someone else do the small but important things at the Lord's Banquet? After all, we are part of this meal also.

Pentecost celebrates the birthday of the Church where they went out and served the Lord in all capacities, even dying for the Lord in the end. I hope we do not have to go that far, but it is a possibility. As yourself, How am I called to serve the Church, the Body of Christ, today?

Ronald Rolheiser writes, "Long before we do anything explicitly religious at all, we have to do something about the fire that burns within us. What we do with that fire, how we channel it, is our spirituality."

What will we do with that spirituality in serving the Church, in serving Christ?

