

Last weekend we celebrated the Ascension and this weekend we celebrate the results of Jesus' ascension. Jesus ascended into heaven to be reunited with the Father – the love of the Father and the Son could not be contained and so spilled out from the heavens to all of creation and to all ages of history – reaching out to us this very day and this love is continually spread and passed on through our sharing and partaking of this love.

Pentecost is about the Holy Spirit, the Spirit which creates and constantly recreates from love. In Genesis we are told that God breathed the Spirit and created life on the earth. In the womb of Mary, the same Spirit renews/re-creates creation in Christ Jesus. And on that first Pentecost this same Spirit again brings life in the birth of the Church, renewed constantly in each one of us.

It is that same spirit that gave courage to a young man or woman to call for that first date...a date that led to marriage before the altar. And it is that Spirit that can also bring life (re-create) to a marriage that may have grown cold through time. A Spirit that can heal the wounds of division between a parent and their child; a spirit that brought friends together and renews a friendship year after year, re-creating and giving life to everyone if their hearts are open to the love that continually flows from the love of the Father and the Son.

In the Pentecost we discover that Jesus is no longer limited to being present to a certain group of individuals, for now he is present to all in a personal and intimate way. Moses cried out that if only all were able to prophecy! In this feast, all are made prophets and all have a significant role to play. Each of us, through the Spirit, are given pieces of puzzle and when we begin to connect them to one another, as Church, we find we can see and hear all that God has to and show to us once we begin to reach out for the other.

In the Pentecost, then, God reveals and guides all of us on our life's journeys. In the tower of Babel there was confusion, but in Pentecost we are given direction and understanding if we open our ear to hear His word and our eyes to see it

I saw an example of this in my journey while away from all of you. I was with my friend, Fr. Mike Joly and a number of his parishioners for a cruise that would take us to Italy, Greece and Ephesus, Turkey. Within this trip, we were to take a number of biblical tours to the places St. Paul (among others) would have ventured (though we were a bit more comfortable than him). It was really to be a rather simple plan of traveling by plane from Richmond to Philly and then to a port in Rome, Italy.

At the Richmond airport, the plane began to move along right on time... then it came to a stop on the tarmac and there we sat for over a half-an-hour as we were told there were head winds that had to be avoided. Finally over Philly, we circled and circled, told we were waiting for our turn to land – reassured that we would not miss our connections. (There were a number of people on this plane going to Rome, but none them were going on the cruise with the group I was to meet up with.) After landing and

taking the bus across the landing strip, we were let out and there we sprinted out, as it was every man, woman and child for himself! Exhausting run, as the terminal was on the opposite side of the airport.

A number of us arrived at the terminal, breathing heavy, but with relief. We were still fifteen minutes from take-off and the plane was still docked to the walkway. Then came the horrible news: We were told it was too late, we could not board. *The plane is still here!* cried one. *Open the door!* yelled another (that may have been me) We banged on the doors pleading. Now I understood what it might mean to come to the gates of heaven and be turned away. It was if we had returned to the tower of Babel, no one cared or acted as if they understood.

We were sent to a long line which must have represented purgatory, as wailing could be heard. We were all fighting for limited seats for the last international flights – each whispered to the attendant so as not to aid the other. Calling my agent, I was told to go for the Belgium connection and from there to Rome. Hours later I found myself in a Belgium airport, then rushing once again to catch another flight to Rome. I had to get to Rome before the boat departed for Messina. I walked to the baggage area, but the machine did not start for another 30 minutes. As it finished cycling, to my chagrin, I saw that my luggage was not there – I panicked a bit and decided I best check outside to see if there were any departing buses for the cruise ship. There were none, but then I realized I had not yet filled out a baggage claim – and to make matters worse, I was locked out and had to go through the security all over again to enter the airport.

I tried to call my travel agent from the Italian phone system only to be told my a computer that all the lines were down! *What had I done Lord!* The cruise, of course, had departed at this point. I then came to the decision that I had best hurry and book another flight to the nearest airport for the next port. Sick feeling, as it was getting later and I knew if I did not get a flight out, I would miss the next port and the ship would be at sea again for Greece. At the ticket line, I was told there nearest town was an hour's drive. The flight would leave Rome at 9:30PM and would be the last one out. I gave him my credit card and then told me it was rejected. Sweet Jesus would the nightmare ever end? However the debit card worked, producing the mighty Euros, which enabled me to purchase a ticket for Catania, the nearest town to the Messina.

I went to the gate by which I was told the plane would be departing from. There were many people there, but nothing on console to tell if the plane was certain to depart from there. At one point I thought she announced that this plane was going to Naples. I asked an Italian woman if this was true and she answered definitely, "No, Catania!" Now that was the clarity of the Holy Spirit that I needed! Of course this plane was delayed (my streak of bad luck continued) as well, getting us to this far away town after 11:30 PM. I ran out, knowing I had to catch the last remaining cabs before the other challengers. A five minute drive and 20 Euros later I made it to a hotel. The next day I would be taken to a bus station and buy a ticket for Messina. I realized if I didn't make this port, it would be another flight to Greece! I would be spending most of my holiday in exotic airports and bus stations.

As the bus traveled, I was very anxious that I would miss my drop and end up back in Belgium. No one spoke English. Finally, hearing the town, I jumped out and then went on foot and eventually saw a sign for the port. Almost brimming with tears of joy, I saw the *promise land*, for there was the Solstice Celebrity cruise ship!

Now you might ask why I told this crazy story. Was it a fact that the Holy Spirit was guiding me along? Perhaps, but in the hindsight of Holy Spirit revelation, I saw something more: Every time I placed myself first before others, I finished last. Perhaps if we had worked together, we all could have arrived in Rome. Also, when I ran off the plane in Catania, trying to get the remaining taxis before the others, I found out that if I had waited, I would have been greeted by two others from the cruise ship that I knew. They, too, had been delayed a day, but were being picked up by the Solstice – I could have joined them.

The Holy Spirit speaks in the language of love – when we deny the self out of love for the other, we will always receive clarity and direction in life and arrive where we need to be. Now, coming back home, the plane was again delayed and when it landed there was that urge to cut in front of the elderly couple to make the gate. Then I thought of what happened on that journey to Rome, so I quietly said to them, “*Please, after you.*” And yes, I arrived on time.