

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
Annual Memorial Mass
Pentecost 2013



One day all at once a father was obliged to take his five-year-old son to work with him, because the mother had to go out of town and take care of her father who was seriously ill. You can imagine how the morning progressed as the father struggled to invent things for the boy to do which would allow him to work. Each attempt occupied the lad for five or ten minutes. You all know how children are at that age.

The father came up with a brilliant idea. He found a map of the world in a magazine and he cut it up into irregular pieces and invited his son to put it back together again. He figured that it would take the little boy at least an hour to accomplish the task and it might even be interesting.

Ten minutes later the boy was back at his father's side with the world map perfectly organized. The father was amazed. I must have a prodigy here, a candidate for Harvard. "How did you manage to put it back together again so quickly?", he asked his son. "Oh it was easy, Daddy," he said turning over the paper. There was a man on the back and it was simple for the boy to put the man together which ordered the map, as well. Indeed, when the human person is in order, so also will be the world in which he or she, you and I live.

Indeed by a happy coincidence the annual Memorial Celebration of the Archdiocese for the Military Services falls this year on the Solemnity of Pentecost when we celebrate the perfect unity of the universe and give thanks for the gift of life, which is the Holy Spirit. In that same context we pause and give thanks for the gifts given and received, the lives spent, and the sacrifices made for our Country.

This afternoon we are invited to celebrate that perfect unity of which Pentecost is the final realization. "On the day of Pentecost when the seven weeks of Easter had come to an end, Christ's Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, manifested, given, and communicated as a divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance."¹

Indeed the Lord Jesus gives the gift of the Holy Spirit primarily to elicit and reaffirm in them the faith in His Resurrection so that they might see, that is, that they might believe.

¹ CCC 731.

Then, they are to strive so that others might see, freeing them from the blindness of sin. A central theme of this solemnity is that the Spirit is fullness.

“The Holy Spirit is like the sun, which, having illuminated humanity in history with its light, went out with its powerful rays on Pentecost morning, and will never set, dispensing eternal life.”² “Obviously, not matter how immutable or infinite it is, [St. Augustine tells us] light alone is not enough to make us see. The eye must want the light and go out to meet it.”³

Indeed Paul explained to that extraordinarily charismatic community at Corinth the way to recognize action of the Holy Spirit. Despite what we might be tempted to think, it is not in extraordinary signs or gifts, but in the profound faith with which one believes and gives witness that Jesus is Lord. An authentic charism does not pretend to be the only or the best. Rather knowing that its own task is for the good of others, it accepts its own limits and respects and appreciates other charisms. Authentic use of a charism includes joyful submission to the charism of the overseer so as to achieve the common good, the building up of the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

As I always remind those that I confirm, divine grace is made evident in the ordinary details of everyday existence when we give evidence that what we have heard proclaimed in the Gospel has been assimilated and influences our decisions, actions, thoughts, and words. The power of the Spirit shows that there can be no dichotomy between belief and life.

The marvel of Pentecost is a living, vibrant Church, which goes out to preach the good news about Jesus Christ even today, just as the Apostles felt thrust out of the locked upper room and began to tell others what they believed. From that first Pentecost onward men and women have witnessed to their belief. Many have opposed the spread of this message. The list of powers opposed to the Church and the Gospel is long. They are dead and the Church still remains, thrives, and preaches that Gospel!

The Holy Spirit is the gift of life in God. The new creation requires the breath of God and indeed *ruah*, the Hebrew word used to mean spirit, also means wind. When we are docile to the Spirit, we are filled with His breath, an inexorable power. Indeed the signs mentioned in that first reading from the Acts of the Apostles help us to appreciate the meaning of the gift of the Spirit.

The fire recalls the interior ardor that fills the Apostles. The gift of tongues or the fact that their hearers readily understood the first preaching of the Spirit-filled Apostles tells us that the Gospel is a universal language. The Church is born with a vocation that surpasses barriers of language, culture, ethnic group, or race. The desire to praise God and communicate His message crosses every separation. It destroys barriers and creates communion. Babel has been reversed and languages now facilitate communication and union.

The final motive of separation is sin and so in the Johannine Pentecost which was the Gospel this afternoon, the first fruit of the victory over sin and death is the power to absolve

² Carlo Cremona, *Oggi è Domenica*, Vol. I, p. 208.

³ Augustine, *Comm. Jn.* 21:4.

sins given by the Lord Jesus to the Apostles and by them to their successors. There is only one “hour” to which the entire earthly existence of Jesus moved. The Lamb of God who has taken upon Himself the sins of the world makes certain that the Church will continue to apply that victory to the concrete situation of believers everywhere.

How important it is that such a priceless gift be assured for the men and women in harm’s way. It is in the celebration of penance and the Holy Eucharist that the specificity of the Catholic chaplain is made manifest. Were this Archdiocese for the Military Services to offer nothing else, providing priests for that purpose alone would justify her existence!

As the Catechism teaches: “the Spirit manifests the risen Lord to them, recalls His word to them and opens their minds to the understanding of His Death and Resurrection. He makes present the mystery of Christ, supremely in the Eucharist, in order to reconcile them, to bring them into communion with God, that they may ‘bear much fruit.’”⁴

We know that Jesus can only be professed as Lord with a life lived in accord with His teaching. It is in our deeds and speech that we give witness to the presence of Christ, in Whom all the differences blend to produce a harmony of unity in love.

That makes our annual gathering this afternoon all the more precious. We are able to be here in prayer, because women and men have set aside their security, their plans, their families, and what is familiar in order to serve this Nation whose foundation is based on principles. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”⁵ Those sentences from the Declaration of Independence mean that the United States was not established, because of a common ethnic or racial origin, or a common language, or those other elements that characterize many other nations of the globe. It is based on certain self-evident truths: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

How can we fail to pray for those who have assured those principles throughout the 237 years of our national existence? How can we fail to be true to our own? We give thanks for countless sacrifices and we pray for the families who still suffer the ravages of war. Those scars do not fade easily. Those afflicted in mind and body and those who love them still pay the price for defending our way of life.

On Friday I lead some of them to Lourdes as part of the International Military Pilgrimage in this Year of Faith. It is such a grace to visit that shrine of our Blessed Virgin during this month dedicated to her. I am grateful to the Knights of Columbus who have made it possible for many wounded warriors to participate in this international moment of prayer for peace and reconciliation.

We gather in this Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, because we want to give thanks in that perfect prayer for all of those who have served. In these weeks the Archdiocese has collected many petitions and requests for remembrance.

⁴ CCC 737.

⁵ Declaration of Independence.

They will be physically carried to the altar, but more importantly they are included in our prayers at this Mass.

We also pray for the fallen so that they might also dwell in the presence of the Author of all. Many are buried not far from here in Arlington National Cemetery. The remains of others rest in France, Italy, Germany, Cuba, and elsewhere. Those of Father Emil Kapaun have never been found. However, he and all the rest continue to live in the hearts of their loved ones and in the fabric of this Nation. Indeed in the case of that noble priest from Pilsen, Kansas, his fellow POW's would not rest until he was recognized with the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Do not those rows of white markers urge us to beg the Holy Spirit to move the minds and hearts of those who govern to seek peace, to engage in dialogue, and to consider the force of arms as a last resort? "In every person the desire for peace is an essential aspiration which coincides in a certain way with the desire for a full, happy and successful human life. In other words, the desire for peace corresponds to a fundamental moral principle, namely, the duty and right to an integral social and communitarian development, which is part of God's plan for mankind. Man is made for the peace which is God's gift."⁶

The little boy taught his father that when the human person is in order so also will the world be in its place. As we give thanks this Pentecost Sunday we beg the Holy Spirit to enlighten each person to open his or her heart to the divine order which will then sort out our world.

⁶ Benedict XVI, Message for World Day of Peace, 2013,1.