

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.
24th Annual Memorial Mass
May 20, 2018



Yesterday morning I stood at the Grotto where Our Blessed Mother appeared to 14 year old Bernadette Soubirous. The Slovaks had just celebrated Mass and the Poles were beginning. The English language Mass at which I presided was next and the Spanish speakers followed us. That is only a small sampling of the languages present at the International Military Pilgrimage. Salvation of the human race by Jesus Christ and the ability to proclaim it is universal.

Indeed the Pentecost event took the experience of Jesus Christ from the Upper Room to the whole world. You and I are here this afternoon, because the eleven Apostles overcame their fear and went out to preach the truth without trepidation and without compromise. It is a happy coincidence that our annual Memorial Mass and archdiocesan pilgrimage to this great national Shrine coincide with the great Solemnity which proclaims the fullness of the Easter Season.

We are here primarily because men and women have repeatedly renounced their own interests, put their security at risk, and gone forth to defend our Nation, her friends, and the innocent all over. Let us give thanks and pray for those who have died in the service of our Country, those who still carry the wounds of their service in body and in mind, the families who have sacrificed while loved ones were far away or did not return, and those veterans who have succumbed on the final journey. So also we pray for all of those

priests who have served the faithful of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, and are listed in the worship aid. We also pray for those at the service of the federal Government outside our borders. May they be ambassadors of peace and justice.

The relationship between those intrepid Apostles whose message touched the hearts of the multitude and who refused to be bound by the limits of language and culture and those we honor today is not difficult to recognize. Both groups went out, sacrificed, faced the unknown, and set their sights and goals on prizes beyond the immediate, the easy, and the mediocre.

Pope Francis repeatedly urges us to bring the Gospel message to the peripheries, because the truth proclaimed by Jesus Christ is not limited by culture, language, or any of those other boundaries we establish. The dramatic first effect of the gift of the Holy Spirit is the abandonment of the Upper Room and the announcement of the truth--not couched in politically correct terms--in a variety of languages. The Galilean fishermen were not limited by their culture. Their message went out to all the earth.

Pentecost invites us to celebrate the unity of the human person in the oneness of holiness. The awareness of our baptismal vocation and gifts pushes us forward to make the Gospel come alive in all places at all times. The Church is by its nature missionary and we cannot lose an opportunity to bring the Gospel to others.

Remember the sign of the wind or breath in the Gospel. We know that breath is necessary for life. It is a common element; we share it; we cannot separate ourselves from others who breathe and exhale, unless we are in some hermetically sealed environment. The Holy Spirit overcomes barriers and does not tolerate discrimination.

“The gift of the Holy Spirit draws the disciples into the communion of life and love, which is the Holy Trinity. This incorporation into the Divine Majesty is manifested by the ability to know the mind of Christ and speak with a prophetic voice in our time.”¹

Is that not also a common trait of those we honor today? Were they not able to look beyond their comfort, their gain, and their immediate desires to

¹ Daniel Mueggenborg, *Come Follow Me B*, p. 118.

share something important? All the U.S. wars of the last century were fought to liberate others from oppression. As a nation we take pride in the generosity of our military. With them we beg for that “ray of light divine” upon our world as we invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those whose decisions can bring peace. Peace on earth is the theme of the 60th International Military Pilgrimage in Lourdes, which concluded a few hours ago.

Pentecost and this memorial celebration are all about gifts given and shared. The gifts of the Spirit are the opposite of the awards and medals given by the military. The latter recognize service and jobs well done. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to be shared and to enable us to do great things. The power of the Spirit is overwhelming and can fill us up, but only if we open ourselves to Him. Then we can overcome the tyranny imposed by the flesh as St. Paul teaches. There are three dimensions of this gift: ability to witness to Christ, to grow from immaturity in the faith to a fullness, and to understand the events of our time and update our understanding of the word and work of Jesus in every era.

Msgr. Vaghi pointed out that “the Spirit gives us a new capacity for love. Living in grace, governed by the new law of the Spirit, is a way of living in love. It is not unlike falling in love with another person. It creates a new relationship.”²

What do we take home from this Solemnity? Recommitment as missionary disciples, gratitude, renewed courage to serve and look beyond our immediate gains and goals. The fullness of Paschal Time talks to us about tongues of fire: picturesque image, but what does it mean? The irresistible power, the universality, and the depth of what happened. May this grace not be vain in us, but yield abundant fruit.

What might paralyze us and dampen our enthusiasm? It might be the dictatorship of “nice” which limits our ability to speak the truth in love. Or the dictatorship of “me” sometimes leaves little room for other pursuits outside of that realm. Those we honor today know how to set me behind the mission. There is also the sense of being inadequate to the task. How do I share my faith? Am I too weak? We should be reassured as one author put it by the fact that “there are no spare parts on the Body of Christ.”³ Each one of us has a

² Peter Vaghi, *Meeting God in the Upper Room*, p. 100.

³ Mueggenborg, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

unique role to fill. Like the sailors on the deck of an aircraft carrier when a plane takes off, each one makes an essential contribution to the mission.

In a society that often denies the existence of absolute truth, we can be intimidated in our quest to share that unique truth about the Lord and Savior of the universe. We might be tempted to remain silent. Pope Francis reminds us that “In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt 28:19*). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. ... indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.”⁴.

Yesterday the universality of the Church, the embrace of Our Mother, and the international longing for peace were evident in the soldiers, marines, airmen, shipmates, members of the Coast Guard, police and security forces from around the world who gathered at Lourdes. Today we remember them and those who have fallen. We give thanks for their sacrifice and recommit ourselves to making good use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit received. So that we might facilitate the “shed[ding] of a ray of light divine.”

⁴ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120.