

“You Will Be My Witnesses”

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, one of the great moments in the life of the Church; its birthday. Jesus, filled with concern for the disciples that he had to leave behind, promised “I will not leave you orphans. I will send you the Holy Sp., the paraclete”. For Jewish community, Pentecost was ‘harvest festival’. It later reminded Moses’ receiving Lords commandments. But we celebrate, the coming of the Holy Spirit upon B.V. Mary and Apostles in the upper room.

The three events in the upper room? Pentecost is the culmination!

How *does The Holy Spirit Strengthens us?* Basically in 3 ways:

-The Spirit strengthens us in *our relationship with Jesus*, strengthens us in our capacity to *defend the faith and to share and witness faith*.

Paraclete is the Greek legal term meaning a *defense attorney*, and it can also mean a spokesman, advocate, or consoler. It means someone who stands alongside, to protect and to sustain the one assisted. By saying “I will send you the Paraclete”, Jesus meant the ‘*one who will be with you always at your side*’. With this Jesus assured the Apostles that they will not remain alone; the Holy Spirit will be *with them* and sustain them in their mission of bearing witness to Gospel into the world.

Friends, we know that we have already received the Spirit, as we are baptized and confirmed. We have a powerful divine Spirit, who will stand with us always, protecting us. Thus, we are never alone, even at the darkest moment of our life, bcs, *we are “confirmed in the H. Spirit”*. We know, the church ‘exist to evangelize’. It’s existential identity; reason for its being. When it ends, the church comes to an end. Our task is “Knowing the gospel, living the gospel and sharing the gospel”.

Bishop Hebda’s Pastoral Letter theme is: “*You will be my Witnesses*”. How can we be His witnesses today? Here we speak about how to understand the new evangelization. Because, it’s high time for us to move from a maintenance church to a missionary church; a church of missionary disciples.

Is church a sleeping beauty? The church, beautified through the blood of Jesus, and set on fire by H. Sp, is she awake, alive and on fire? Today, we cannot think of a 'Christendom model' church', but "apostolic model". Minority church, a persecuted church, but a charismatic church. -the 12 growing to 72 and then reaching out to all.

Is there anything new in this? Yes: New Ev. Is new in its ardor, new in its methods and new in its expressions. Above all, a NEW awareness that missionary discipleship is a matter of all Christians" JP II. "There is no committing of "*all of church's energies to a New Evangelization, without the missionary commitment of **all of the baptized***" (RM.2)

Synod-SET-Small group ministry: will be commissioned in 2 weeks. This is modelled after early church. The dual movement of the H. Sp: It acts not only through the sacraments or from high, but also from below, through the network of grace established by the charisms of all the laity

Parish is a community of communities, a family of families. Sharing faith is easier in small groups and to grow in holiness, together. A renewed parish always needs the collaboration of lay people. Small groups are at the service of the parish renewal.

Small Groups: They are a privileged home for charisms (gifts). Through it, the faithful can discover their charisms; cultivate and express their charisms; put their charisms at the service of others. Share their faith and grow in holiness together, day-by- day.

Friends, Pentecost is the day we are to open our hearts to be awakened by the fire of the Sp. *The vibrant liturgical color red*, today reminds us *to allow the Sp. to set our hearts on fire/* like the apostles, so that we may shine brightly as people of light; people who live and radiate, with joy and conviction, the gifts of the H. Sp. Today, as Christians, Joy is our mission, Love is our message, and Hope is our witness. 'Come holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful; enkindle in them the fire of your love'.

