

PENTECOST (WHITSUNDAY) 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ACTS 2.1-22 St. JOHN 14.15-31



Remember the “Energizer Bunny”...the iconic battery-powered rabbit that first appeared in 1988. He kept going and going and he still keeps going...31 years after his first appearance...probably with new batteries.

Pentecost is the celebration of God’s gift of the Holy Spirit...the gift that keeps on giving and giving and giving. He doesn’t need a battery to keep giving...and he recharges and energizes us!

The word *Pentecost* comes from the Greek word *Pentēkostē*...meaning fiftieth. It refers to the Jewish wheat harvest festival celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover. In Jesus’ time it was also the commemoration of God’s gift of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai...the birthday of the ‘Jewish Church’.

The name Pentecost was taken over by the Church from Judaism. It is celebrated on the fiftieth day after Easter...the Christian Passover...and concludes the Easter Season. Pentecost is often considered the birthday of the Church.

After the Ascension...the Apostles were told not to stand staring up into the sky. They were told to go back to Jerusalem and wait for further instructions. Before he went back to heaven...Jesus told the Apostles the gift he would send them would make everything clear to them. What happened next changed the Apostles and our lives forever!

Enlightened by the Holy Spirit the Apostles now understood Jesus’ mission was to reconcile all mankind to our Father in heaven. They were empowered to take that message out into the world. We are empowered to do exactly the same thing.

There were many Jews from all over who had stayed in Jerusalem after the Passover to celebrate Pentecost. They spoke many languages. They were awestruck at being able to hear the Apostles’ message in their own languages. They took what they heard back to their own countries...this was the birthday of the Church and it would grow and prosper as the Good News about Jesus spread.

The most remarkable conversion was in Peter himself. No longer the coward who had run away from Jesus on Maundy Thursday...he stood up and countered the accusation the Apostles were drunk. He convinced them what they were witnessing was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy of 500 years earlier...*“God will pour out his Spirit on everyone...their sons and daughters will proclaim his message...their young men will see visions...their old men will have dreams...and whoever calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.”* Thousands of people listened to Peter and were baptized.

God’s Holy Spirit enlightens and empowers us too. He gives us the courage to spread the Good News about Jesus. And he is the one who recharges our spiritual batteries and keeps us energized...and to do what we pray for in the Collect...to have right judgment in all things. Having right judgment in all things must include an action plan...to always try to do the right things.

We can only accomplish the work God has given us because we have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to do our work. And our work must be a labor of love. Jesus tells us if we really love him we will keep his commandments. A commandment is not a suggestion with an opt-out clause. Jesus tells us to love one another just as much as he loves us. Keeping his commandments is part of our work. We can’t do that on our own. The strength we get to love God above all else and love our neighbors as God loves us comes from the Holy Spirit...God’s Holy Helper.

We gladly proclaim Pentecost the Church’s Birthday...our birthday...on which we received the special gift Jesus promised he would send to help us. We became energized by the power of the Holy Spirit at our baptisms. We asked God to increase the Holy Spirit in our lives at our confirmations...we got recharged.

Today we thank God for the gift of his Holy Spirit...the gift that keeps on giving...and giving...and giving. And because this is the Church’s birthday...and we are the Church...let’s wish each other Happy Birthday!

