

May 23, 2021 – [Pentecost](#)

Acts 2:1-11

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

Gal 5:16-25

Jn 15:26-27; 16:12-15

By Rev. Gregory J. Semeniuk, C.M., S.T.D.

In the Spring of 1979, Pope John Paul II returned to his native Poland for the first time after his election. On the Vigil of Pentecost Sunday, he was greeted by thousands of faithful in Victory Square, Warsaw, Poland. The Polish people longed for signs of renewal while under Communism. John Paul II called down God's transformative power of the Holy Spirit. I quote his words, "May your Spirit come down! May your Spirit renew the face of the earth. This earth." Those few spirit-filled words ignited the hearts of the Polish nation. God's liberating spirit was released in history. Thus, a captive Polish nation began the final leg of its journey to freedom, culminating in the Fall of the Soviet Union.

In our own day, the Holy Spirit represents the promise of renewal to a troubled world. On this Pentecost Sunday, the Risen Christ fulfills his promise to free us from fear as he restores his people to full health. God desires that his Spirit be known by the disciples for the sake of liberating them for the mission to preach the Gospel and advance the God's Reign of justice, love and peace. The Spirit makes its presence known to the disciples in wind and flame. But the Spirit presence is felt in the hearts of the Community at prayer, namely, the Twelve Apostles, disciples, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus. In our day, the Holy Spirit is felt as a divine gift of liberation. God gives life and makes it come to life; He gives health; strength flows from Him and the ailing souls whose life is being split becomes whole again. God's Spirit gives faith, strength, emotion and softening, gives tears, enthusiasm, and immortal hope. Everything about our lives is fragile and transitory. In contrast, the Spirit of God bestows permanence of multiple spiritual gifts.

The Holy Spirit comes to us as a guest. His joy is to remain in our hearts to raise them to God in prayer and acts of sacrificial love. St. Paul urges us to welcome the divine guest, "If we live in the Spirit, then let us follow the Spirit." St. Paul prepares the baptized for engaging the battle between the spirit and flesh. These two spiritual realities are opposed; the spirit gives life and the flesh leads to death. In all our deliberations, especially when faced with moral decisions we need to ask the help of the Spirit. The Spirit also helps us in our weakness as in times of temptation. We grow in virtue to the degree that we consent to the presence of the Holy Spirit. We receive help to fulfill the Great Commandment of Christ, to love one another as he loved us. The Spirit helps us to choose the way opened to us by the Risen Lord so as to remain in his love. This is a cause of our joy. Our life in the Spirit therefore depends on welcoming the divine guest.

On this Pentecost, we relive the sending of the Holy Spirit. Saint Pope John Paul II believed that the Spirit recreates hearts and changes reality here and now. The Apostles, disciples and the Blessed Mother, received the gift of the Holy Spirit in the room where the Master gathered to celebrate the memorial of his saving death. Our

prayer of the Eucharist on this Pentecost Sunday leads to partake of the body and blood of Christ. And God's love shared becomes our communion with the Holy Trinity and one another.

Rev. Gregory J. Semeniuk, C.M., S.T.D., is a Vincentian priest. Currently he serves as the Executive Director of the [Vincentian Solidarity Office](#), Philadelphia, PA. The office does project-based fundraising for works of evangelization and service of the poor in the developing world.