

## Why I Am Catholic

### Pentecost

At Pentecost, Christ sent His Holy Spirit to establish the Catholic Church. To set up one church that would continue His work and ministry and preach the Good News, beginning with those who walked with Him, knew Him, saw Him after He rose from the dead, and saw Him ascend into Heaven. He filled them with His Spirit, freeing them from fear, equipping them for what they would be called to do, and showering them with His love.

"When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit. . ." (Acts 2:1-4) They were together—not separate—and the Spirit came down on all of them, giving them spiritual gifts—some they would have in common, some distinct for the ministry each would be called to.

"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 divine person: of his fullness, Christ, the Lord, pours out the Spirit in abundance." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 731) "Since that day, the Kingdom announced by Christ has been open to those who believe in him. . . By his coming, which never ceases, the Holy Spirit causes the world to enter into the 'last days,' the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated." (732)

"Filled with the Holy Spirit the apostles began to proclaim 'the mighty works of God,' and Peter declared this outpouring of the Spirit to be the sign of the messianic age. Those who believed in the apostolic preaching and were baptized received the gift of the Holy Spirit in their turn." The sacrament of Confirmation: "in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church." (1287-88)

Our Pentecost is our Baptism. It is renewed, expanded, and deepened at Confirmation. It is renewed each time we celebrate Pentecost, each time we are "all in one place together," each time we pray in the Spirit, each time we give more of our lives to God. Christ desires not only to give us His Spirit, but that we will be Spirit-led, cooperating with God's plans and wisdom.

"The purpose of Pentecost was the Church. The Holy Spirit was sent to birth and equip the Church for Her mission. Even the gifts of the Spirit were given to the whole Church and for the common good. Yes, they can and are manifested by individuals but they always serve the greater missionary purpose of the Church." (Deacon Keith Fournier, *The Purpose of Pentecost*)

"The Holy Spirit was not poured out on the disciples so that they could form movements outside of the Church, rather so that they could become the Church, the communion of the faithful, living in the Church and in midst of the world, on mission. . . The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Church on that great day of Pentecost so that it could continue the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ." (Fournier)

Over the centuries there has always been tension between the institutional gifts of the Church and its charismatic gifts. Internal splits and splits in Protestant congregations often have been groups breaking off claiming "that they had the Holy Spirit and that everyone else did not."

St. Paul is dealing with this problem in Corinth when he writes in I Cor 12 about the unity and variety of gifts and that we are "one body, many parts." "**Some people God has designated in the church** to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues." (v. 28) We still have the same problem today.

From battles over preparation requirements for sacraments to cafeteria Catholics to volunteers not wanting to work with others and wanting to do it "my way," we face the same spiritual challenges as the early Church.

The Holy Spirit was given to the Church, not to individuals or certain groups. Christ pours out His Spirit on us through the Church. The Holy Spirit comes to gather us together as a unified, diversified body, discerning God's will, continuing the mission of Christ, and doing only what the Spirit empowers us to do. Pentecost begins a new year of unity and cooperation.