

***Pentecost Sunday***  
***May 31, 2020***

*"The missionary character belongs to her very essence. It is a constitutive property of the Church of Christ, because the Holy Spirit has made her missionary from her origin."  
(Pope St. John Paul II, General Audience of September 20, 1989)*

In the Second Vatican Council's decree, *Ad Gentes*, the Fathers of the Council stated the Pentecost event and the beginning of the Church are closely connected. It was from the reception of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Apostles would go forth to teach, preach, and found other Christian communities. From this pivotal moment till our present day, the Holy Spirit has been both the guide and inspiration of the Church's missionary activity. As Pope St. John Paul II said, the essence of the church is her missionary character.

Returning to the text of our first reading taken from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1-11), we can see this missionary character portrayed through the "gift of tongues." For you and I living in the Bible Belt, when we hear our Christian brothers and sisters speak of the "gift of tongues," we assume they are referring to (please, I am not intending to insult, but I cannot find another way to describe it) the "babble" one can hear when they are praying in the Spirit. I have often heard this "babble" described as an ancient forgotten language or a person's "spirit language" which can only be understood by God. This is not the Gift of Tongues St. Luke was referring to in the Acts of the Apostles for he wrote that those in Jerusalem were able to understand the Apostles in their own native language. St. Luke recounts how the people were amazed because these men were Galileans; meaning the likelihood of their having a conversational knowledge of those various languages would be very hard to justify. Yet, this event illustrates how the Holy Spirit desires the name of God to be praised by people of all nations.

The Holy Spirit would guide men and women, throughout the Church's history, to continue proclaiming the name of God with this ever vibrant missionary zeal. Our own Archdiocese of Mobile, owes its foundation to French priests braving the journey to the New World. We have also been blessed through the pastoral care of priests, brothers, and sisters arriving from Ireland, India, Africa, Vietnam, the Philippines, Canada, and our own native land. The Holy Spirit continues to inspire and guide men and women of various nations to go forth and spread the Good News of the Gospel.

As blessed as we are through the efforts of the generous men and women, we cannot become stagnate hoping God will continue to send priests, brothers, and sisters from other countries to care for us. We must encourage the young from our community to join in this great work of the Church of God. We must begin by making our homes into "little churches" fostering the young through lives of prayer and sacrifice. In a world filled with noise, we must encourage quiet reflection. God is still asking our young to forsake the world and choose a life with Him. Let us recommit ourselves to assisting Him in this grand effort. Let us ask God to inspire a young person from our parish to consider joining the ranks of His ministers dedicating their lives to the service of His people.