

Pentecost... Transformation

Introduction...

Today is the Feast of Pentecost...

We celebrate the coming of the Jesus' Spirit to the first disciples and now into our own lives.

We sometimes call this the "birthday" of the Church.

But what does that all mean?

And, the more important question: "So what?"

I Feast of Pentecost... Transformation

I would suggest that the Feast of Pentecost is about "transformation"... the "transformation" of the first disciples of Jesus, and ultimately our own "transformation."

Let's briefly look at what this means.

The Scripture readings offer us some aspects of this "transformation."

In the first reading we see how the coming of the Spirit, described as a "mighty wind," and "tongues of fire,"

transforms the disciples from fearful, anxious, cowardly people into bold and courageous disciples of Jesus...

witnesses to all that Jesus said and did.

What changed them?

Jesus sends his promised Spirit to "transform" them, change them, motivate and empower them

to live as his disciples in their world,

and to continue His Mission in their world,

a mission of 'repairing the broken world',
even if this might lead to their rejection or persecution.

Listen to the Jesus' own words in today's Gospel:

"Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,

"Receive the Holy Spirit."

How we need Jesus' Spirit to help us to join Jesus in his mission of bringing God's beauty and goodness and healing and truth into our broken world.

II Pentecost - So What?

As I said...

Pentecost is about "transformation" - our transformation.

Spiritual transformation –

- from spiritual ugliness to spiritual beauty
- from spiritual deformation to spiritual transformation

Jesus gives us His Spirit to "transform" us... to change us. How?

This takes time...it's a process...

there's so much in us that needs to be changed, "transformed"...

There's our own sinfulness,

our bad habits,

our woundedness...

There are some of our cultural attitudes and values which are not "of Christ," but which we "buy into..."

more stuff is better, I consume and therefore I am, lust-full porn... and, of course, wanting to have it our way all of the time.

Listen to the beautiful Sequence of today's Mass which describes the Spirit's transforming job...

*Heal our wounds, our strength renew
On our dryness pour your dew
Wash the stains of guilt away.*

*Bend the stubborn heart and will
Melt the frozen, warm the chill
Guide the steps that go astray.*

What are we being 'transformed' into?

What are we becoming with the transforming power of Jesus' Spirit?

Story... The Wise Man and The Bandit

Once upon a time there was a very wise man who was on his way to a village on the other side of the mountain to teach, to beg, and to call more disciples to follow his way.

He intended to take a shortcut over the mountain pass to save time.

But immediately the people and his friends said, "No, don't go that way.

The pass is filled with bandits lying in wait for you and if they find you don't have money or jewels they will kill you brutally.

The wise man couldn't be bothered with such warnings, and he continued on his way. Well, no sooner had he climbed high into the pass when a notorious bandit appeared, bearing down on him with sword in hand and shouting, "Your money or your life!"

The wise man looked up at the man astride his horse, pulled out his empty pockets and said, "I guess it's my life, since I have no money."

As the bandit moved toward him, sword in motion, the wise man stopped him in his tracks:

"You know the rules. If you take my life, then you must at least grant me a last wish!"

*The bandit stopped. "Alright. What do you want? Make it quick old man."
The wise man said, "My wish is simple and has two parts. First, see that great tree over there and the limb that extends far out over the path? Cut it off!"*

The bandit grinned and in seconds the limb lay on the ground.

"Alright old man, what is the second part?"

*The wise man turned toward him and said very quietly and steadily,
"Now put it back on again."*

The bandit was speechless and then started laughing uproariously. "You are the stupidest man I've ever met! No one can put a limb back on a tree after it's been cut off! Insane! You're idiotic."

The wise man looked at him and said,

"I am not the one who is stupid. You are. Anyone can destroy. Any child without knowledge can cut things up. Anyone can main, kill, mutilate and undo reality. It takes no power or intelligence whatsoever."

The bandit was caught off guard. The wise man continued,

"What takes power, real power, is to be able to heal, to bring life, to restore, to stand in the breach, to undo the evil and the destruction that you've done in the past. That takes real power, imagination, and creativity. What you've done takes nothing at all. Anyone can do what you've done.

They eyed each other for a long time. Then the bandit got off of his horse, laid down his sword at the wise man's feet, knelt in respect before him, and humbly asked,

"Teach me that kind of power."

That is the kind of power that Jesus exercised when he was among us.
That is what Jesus would have us do in our world...
but only with help power of Jesus' Spirit in our lives.

We are called to be people of mercy and forgiveness,
people of compassion and generosity –
people concerned about others,
people of service,
and not just about "doing it our way,"
and "getting our piece of the pie."

Conclusion...

As we come to this communion this morning at our Pentecost Eucharist,
let's ask Jesus to pour His Spirit into our hearts –

Jesus, come into our hearts this day.

Give us the gift of your Spirit.

Help us to be your people in our world..

At home, on the job, in school,

In our neighborhood.

May your Spirit 'transform' us this day,

and every day.

help us to bring life and beauty and goodness and truth into our world.

Help us to choose a culture of life as St. John Paul II encouraged.

Help us to become more and more –

Like you.

This is the *glamour* of our Christian vocation.

Amen? Amen!