

FEAST OF PENTECOST—Year B—M05-D23-Y2021

01. Today, we celebrate the **great Feast of Pentecost—also known as the birthday of the Church** — for on this day the **Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles and gave birth to the Church—the Mystical Body of Christ.**
02. In this powerful drama, there are some important characters we need to consider. First, and foremost—is **the Holy Spirit Himself—the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity—the Spirit of God Who fills the souls of the Apostles with His Truth, His Light and His Love.**
03. Then, there are the Apostles themselves who were empowered **BY the Holy Spirit to preach the Good News—and to bear Christ to the world with courage, and with power.**
04. But there's one more person in the Pentecost drama that needs to be emphasized — **a person who OFTEN doesn't get noticed or mentioned in the recounting of this DECISIVE event in the history of salvation.**
05. In the full account of the Pentecost story, as recounted in the Book of Acts—it says that **the Mother of Jesus was there with the Apostles when the Holy Spirit came down upon them.**
06. Some of you may have heard me tell this story before—but personally, it's always puzzled me why Mary was there and why **the author of the Book of Acts (Luke the Evangelist) mentions Her presence at the Pentecost event.**
07. It's always puzzled me because Mary **would not have had any need for the Pentecost experience—**having already been COMPLETELY filled with the Holy Spirit — so much so, that **it is NOT possible for a human being—or FOR any other creature for that matter—to be more filled with the Holy Spirit than Mary was.**
08. For even from the moment of Her Conception—**Mary was SO filled with the Holy Spirit that She is referred to as the SPOUSE of the Holy Spirit.** And so, in my mind, there was no real need for the

Mother of God to receive further—what She already possesses SO COMPLETELY.

09. But upon further reflection on this curious detail in the Pentecost event—it **became undeniably clear to me why Mary was there**. In fact, the reason for Mary's Presence at Pentecost **became clear to me in a very surprising and powerful way**.
10. One day, while I was looking at an image depicting the Pentecost event—it **suddenly hit me like A TON OF BRICKS**—as if God was **screaming in my ear**. Mary was there at Pentecost because **She was giving birth to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ — just as She had given birth to the ACTUAL PHYSICAL Body of Christ during the first Christmas**.
11. God also showed me that **it is only through the Power of the Holy Spirit that this accomplished**. Because just as, through the power of the Spirit, Mary **had conceived and given birth to the human nature and the physical Body of Christ — so too She now gives birth to the Mystical Body of Christ in the same way—THROUGH the power of the Holy Spirit**.
12. And so, this is the reason why Mary was there — and why **She truly IS Mother of the Church—because She truly gave birth to the Church—just as surely as She had given birth to the Head of the Church, Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself**.
13. For just as Mary's Presence was essential at the Incarnation, and the Birth of Christ — so too Her Presence was essential at the Birth of **the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ—cooperating with the Holy Spirit to give birth to the Church through the awesome power of Her Intercession, and Her Mediation**.
14. What this means for **ALL of us** is that we are **equally children of Mary as we are children of the Church — and that to be a child of the Church IS ALSO TO BE a child of Mary—just as to be a child of Mary IS ALSO TO BE a child of the Church**.

15. In fact, I would argue that **it's impossible to be a TRUE child of the Church without ALSO being a true child of Our Lady**—just as it is impossible to be a true child of Our Lady without **ALSO being a true child of the Church**.
16. Apart from Mary's crucial role and presence at Pentecost—at the heart of the Pentecost story is God's **great desire to fill us with His Spirit—and to dwell within us** — because the Church is not a building—rather, the Church is people—a **COMMUNITY of people—the extended Family of God** — where the human body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit—and where the human heart is the **Tabernacle of Our Lord**.
17. In other words, Pentecost is **not ONLY about the Holy Spirit and Mary giving birth to the Church AMONG US**—it is also about the **Holy Spirit and Mary giving birth to the Church WITHIN US**—about making each of us **INTO Church**.
18. A few years ago, I saw a movie that really brought this home for me — it's a movie that was recommended to me by several people — a **movie called THE SHACK based on the best-selling book of the same name**.
19. **THE SHACK is a profound and powerful film**—filled with many beautiful insights about living an **AUTHENTIC life of faith** — a film I **highly recommend to anyone who's dealing with great pain and great loss in life**—and who's struggling with anger towards God as a result.
20. Without giving too much away—in the movie, the main character, named Mack, has experienced **enormous tragedy and trauma in life—both as a child and as an adult**.
21. However, most of the film takes place **during his adult years, when shortly after a horrible tragedy has struck his family**—Mack receives a mysterious note inviting him to go to a specific shack in the woods—a **shack that represents great pain and great loss for**

him. The note was signed Papa—the name his wife often used referring to God.

22. Mack reluctantly decides to go to this shack—and it is there that he has **a mystical encounter with the Blessed Trinity—who appear to him in the form of different people.**
23. At the shack, Mack is taken down a path of healing and forgiveness **as he is forced to confront many of the demons that plague him—** and where he is forced to come to terms with **the pain, the bitterness, and the trauma that has tormented and imprisoned him.**
24. Along this journey of healing, Mack receives **several profound insights from this mystical encounter with the Blessed Trinity —** but I think one of the most significant insights is when Jesus tells Mack that the Trinity is **not interested in slaves—that what They want are family and friends to share Their Life with.**
25. In other words, the most important **“R” WORD** in religion is **not ‘rules’, but rather ‘relationship.’** That God seeks an **authentic relationship with us—**one that is based on **the truth of WHO WE REALLY ARE—**and not on the false image and pretense of how we want to be perceived.
26. One of the many insights I received from this film is that **the shack really represents the human heart —** but it is a place in the human heart **where most of us don’t want to go — a place deep within us that may be full of rage, bitterness, pain, depravity, and fear.**
27. It is a place we want to hide **from others, from ourselves, and even from God —** because it is a place where we least expect to find **God—** and a place that we think God would **LEAST** want to be.
28. But nothing could be further from the truth — for this is the place **where God MOST** wants to be—and where we will have the most **AUTHENTIC** experience of God.
29. Because it is the place that we are **most likely to encounter God in a way that is REAL AND MEANINGFUL—**for God didn’t come among

us in the flesh to **PLAY IT SAFE**—and to engage us in pleasantries and niceties — He came to be with us in our filth—in the ugliness, the poverty, and the messiness that is often found in the human heart.

30. Because God is not interested in a **superficial relationship with us**—one that is based on **FALSE** images and **FALSE** projections of self—one that is based on **pious talk and platitudes** — He is interested in a **REAL relationship with us**—a relationship with our **TRUE self**—with all our warts, our wounds, our weaknesses, and our pain.
31. And so, the shack represents a place **beyond religiosity, beyond piety, and beyond pretense**. It is a place in the human heart that is raw and real. But, **AGAIN**, it is a place where God most wants to meet us—and where we will have the most authentic and meaningful encounter **WITH God**.
32. Because God **sees right through pretense and has no interest in it**. And God is not interested in the false image of self we like to present to Him, to the others, and even to ourselves. For it is in the shack, those dark recesses of the human heart—that place that represents much pain, anger, and loss—that Mack had the most meaningful and life changing experience of God—and where we will have the same.
33. And so, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is about the beginning of a **new relationship with God**—a real and authentic relationship with Him—something far beyond rules and rituals. It is about an encounter with God that is **personal and real**—where God meets us in places that we don't like to go—in places we would rather bury deep within us.
34. Because true religion is **not about putting up a front for God**—or about burying and hiding unpleasant emotions from Him—or about only telling Him things we **THINK** He wants to hear. True religion is about **bearing the truth that is in our hearts to God** so

that He may enter there, dwell there, and transform our pain into peace.

- 35. For the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost shows us that the place God wants to dwell the most—and the place we will MOST find a real and meaningful experience of God, IS the human heart — because the human heart is (in fact) the Tabernacle where God chooses to dwell — and the human heart (with all with all its passions, all its sins, all its pain, all its hopes and cares)—is where we will find God Who has chosen NOT ONLY to live among us, but to live WITHIN US.**
- 36. And Mary is one of the keys to this new kind of relationship with God—because just as She is truly Mother of the Church AMONG us—She is ALSO Mother of the Church WITHIN us. For it is only by the Holy Spirit, and THROUGH Mary—that Christ is authentically born in the human heart—and that the human heart truly becomes a living Tabernacle of the Lord.**
- 37. In other words, it is only by the Holy Spirit, and THROUGH Mary—that we come to an intensely personal experience and knowledge of God and begin an authentic relationship with Him. And it is only when we have an authentic RELATIONSHIP with God—where we allow God to touch us, to speak to us, and to embrace us in our poverty, our depravity, and our pain—that the Church is truly born AMONG us and WITHIN us. AMEN.**