

**HOMILY BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
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APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST  
BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As representative of Pope Francis to the United States, it is my joy to greet you in his name, and to convey to you his spiritual closeness. By the way, this “spiritual closeness” is possible because of the mystery we celebrate today: the Gift of the Holy Spirit. As Saint Paul reminded us in the second reading: “No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of God makes of all who believe in Jesus one body, no matter how separated we are by space and time. And so, in the name of the Holy Father, and from my own heart: Happy Pentecost!

Fifty days ago, I was here in this same Basilica; it was the night of the Easter Vigil. Perhaps some of you were also here that night. To those who were here with us, I gave the same encouragement that Jesus gave to Mary Magdalene when he encountered her after his resurrection. Two instructions: “Don’t be afraid,” and “Go!” Go and share with others the good news that Jesus is alive!<sup>2</sup>

Have you done this? Have you continued to experience the joy of Jesus’ Resurrection during this Easter season? Have you continued to share that joy through works of love? Let’s be honest: sustaining the joy of Easter is a challenge! Our world, with its many problems, *resists* the good news that God is alive and that we have reason to hope. Even though we are Christians, we too can fall into the temptation to doubt the good news, to become negative, and to focus more on the weight of the world’s problems than on the risen Savior who has conquered the world.

Even the Apostles had this tendency. They encountered Jesus alive during 40 days before his Ascension, but it wasn’t evident that their lives had changed so much. If Jesus’ resurrection was to transform them, they still needed something. **They needed the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon them**, to make them “witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”.<sup>3</sup> My brothers and sisters, this is what we also need. **We need the power of the Holy Spirit if our lives are going to be transformed, and if we, by our witness to Jesus, are going to transform the world. It is for this reason that we celebrate Pentecost. We gather to pray that we may be renewed “as by a new Pentecost”.**<sup>4</sup>

To be an “Easter people” requires that we be a “Pentecost people”. This means that we always remain open to the gifts that the Holy Spirit pours into us, that we act in the strength of those gifts, and that we boldly follow the Spirit’s promptings. This is what the Apostles and the rest of the 120 disciples

discovered on that first Christian Pentecost. **They needed another “Advocate” to be with them if their personal faith in Jesus was to become a saving proclamation for others.**

As promised, the Holy Spirit came; and when he fell upon them, their lives were finally changed from being only “disciples” to becoming “apostles”. They went from being merely the students of a great rabbi to becoming *other Christs* in the world. Fully equipped by the divine Spirit who rushed into their souls, they left the upper room and went forth to preach the good news to everyone. By the power of the Holy Spirit and the special gifts that he gave them, their preaching immediately won thousands more people to the way of the Lord Jesus. *And the Church of Christ was born.*

My dear brothers and sisters, we should not think that we have been given any less than what the first disciples received. The Holy Spirit, who has come to dwell in us by Baptism and Confirmation, is the *same* Spirit, with the same divine power, that those first disciples received. But in order for that power to be fully effective, we must *act* according to the Spirit’s gifts – according to the specific “charisms” that God has woven into our lives. In the New Testament, Saint Paul lists many gifts of the Holy Spirit, and in today’s second reading, he says that “to each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit”.<sup>5</sup>

What gift have *you* been given by the Holy Spirit?... A gift of preaching?... A gift for healing?... Intercession?... A gift for reaching out to the poor, frustrated, or depressed?... A gift for organizing the works of the Church? My friends, it is worth taking time to pray and discern how God has gifted you in a special way. When we know our spiritual gifts, we begin to understand the particular way in which we are called to serve. And when we serve according to our spiritual gifts and calling, we experience the comforting joy of the Gospel.

Today, on this final day of the Easter season, Pentecost, let us welcome the Holy Spirit who will remind us that Christ is alive. He lives in the Eucharist. He lives in you and in me. He lives in his Church. And if we live and act in him, then our lives take on a new dimension, because we are already sharers in his risen life.

And so, to borrow from the words of today’s Pentecost *Sequence*, which were so beautifully sung before the Gospel:

*Come, Holy Spirit, come!  
And from your celestial home  
Shed a ray of light divine!...*

*O most blessed Light divine,  
Shine within these hearts of yours,  
And our inmost being fill!...*

*On the faithful, who adore  
And confess you, evermore*

*In your sevenfold gift descend;  
Give them virtue's sure reward;  
Give them your salvation, Lord;  
Give them joys that never end. Amen.  
Alleluia.*

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<sup>1</sup>1 *Corinthians* 12:3b.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Matthew* 28:10.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts of the Apostles* 1:8.

<sup>4</sup> Pope St. John XXIII, Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis*, solemnly convoking the Second Vatican Council, December 25, 1961, 23.

<sup>5</sup> 1 *Corinthians* 12:7.