

# Archbishop Lori's Homily: Pentecost Sunday; Knights of Columbus State Deputies Meeting

*Pentecost Sunday; Knights of Columbus State Deputies Meeting*

*New Haven, Connecticut*

*June 9, 2019*

## **Where We've Been and Where We're Going**

As your chaplain and homilist, I hope you have been able to see a progression in the talks which I have offered you during this important weekend. As these days together conclude, let me offer you a reprise of where we've been and where we're going, and to do this in the short space of a Pentecost Sunday homily.

Friday we celebrated a Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart in which we prayed for that personal and moral conversion and formation by which we become worthy to receive the Holy Spirit who equips us for the leadership roles we have been asked to assume in the Order. Later on, in my opening address, I spoke of how Pope Francis is calling us to undergo a change of culture, a new missionary impulse. For us this means retrieving Father McGivney's original vision for the Knights, namely, as a preeminent path for the men in our parishes to encounter Christ, to embrace the faith, to be better spouses and husbands, and to be united in fraternity as men of authentic charity. Yesterday morning, and not a moment too soon, I identified the Holy Spirit as ultimate "the change-agent" by whose grace we are personally renewed in Christ, such that we live the principles of the Order come alive in us— in our spiritual lives, in our life at home and at work, in our relationships with one another, and in our love and service for those in need.

This morning, as we celebrate the beautiful and life-giving Feast of Pentecost, all of this reaches not only its culmination but indeed a new beginning. Joined mystically with the Virgin Mary and the Apostles in the Upper Room, we, with the whole Church, are overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who revives in our souls the

living presence of Christ, crucified and risen, the Spirit who enables us to contemplate our faith and to put our faith into action.

### **What Changed for the Apostles**

What changed for the Apostles at Pentecost? When the Spirit came upon them as tongues of fire, they were indeed changed. No longer were they frightened, confused, or unsure of themselves. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus came alive in them in a new & powerful way. They experienced a new closeness to Jesus, an intimacy with the Lord, an encounter, that exceeded everything they had experienced during Jesus' earthly life. They experienced a new dynamism, a new source of life and a comprehensive understanding of Jesus' identity, mission, and teaching.

And what was the result? They put their faith in action. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that, filled with the Holy Spirit, the Apostles began to speak in different tongues – such that people from various cities and countries understood them. In the power of the Holy Spirit, they spoke the universal language of charity, that is to say, the Father's immense love revealed in Christ crucified and risen, that love which alone satisfies the deepest desires of the human heart, that love which destroys our enmity with God and our enmity against one another. By courageously bearing witness to Christ in a very public way, without fear of consequence, the Apostles put their faith in action.

And what else? When the Spirit came upon the Apostles, they began to live a wholly new manner. They not only thought differently but acted differently, at last fully understanding what Jesus taught them while he was still with them: "If you love me," Jesus said, "you will keep my commandments" – and, as we know, the command of Jesus is the command of charity: to love God above all else and to love others as he, Jesus, has first loved us. By living the new life of grace, by living a life of hope and charity, the Apostles began to put their faith into action.

And what else besides? As the Holy Spirit swept through the Upper Room, the Cenacle, and invaded the hearts of those gathered there to pray, he distributed his spiritual gifts among them according to God's good pleasure. And these spiritual gifts were to be used, not just for their private sanctification, but indeed for the

building up of the Church, the Body of Christ. As St. Paul would later write, there is only one Spirit but there are a variety of manifestations of the Holy Spirit, all of them given for some benefit to the Christian community. As the Apostles began the work of spreading the Gospel far and wide and building up Christian communities wherever they went, they, in the power of the Holy Spirit, were enabled to put their faith in action.

## **Faith in Action**

The last three words of each of the foregoing paragraphs ought to have a familiar ring, because, as all of us know, Faith in Action is the premier program that brings together under one heading all the principal ways that we, as the family of the Knights of Columbus, can embrace our faith and encounter the living Christ, build up our families as sanctuaries of love and life, strengthen our parish communities and the communities where we live and work, and defend life at all stages, especially the unborn and the elderly, while affirming the lives of our young athletes with disabilities. In these and in so many other ways, the Knights of Columbus puts us squarely in the path of the Holy Spirit so that we, like the Apostles of old, can put our faith into action.

For this to happen, for this program to become a living reality in our jurisdictions, and not just a program but indeed a way of life for us as Knights, what has to happen? The answer is, the same thing that happened to the Apostles in the Upper Room. This place of worship is, in effect, our Upper Room, our Cenacle. And as we hear God's Word and welcome Risen Lord into our midst, we must open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, perhaps as never before, tapping into that new dynamism, that new source of life, which gives us a comprehensive understanding of Jesus' identity, mission, and teaching, and imparts to us the courage and energy to go forth from this place to bear witness to Christ by speaking of him in ways that all can grasp, by proclaiming him by the goodness and generosity of our lives, by living according to the commandment of love, the commandment of charity.

None of this must remain in the abstract or in the realm of good intentions but instead must be made visible, palpable, real in our lives and in the lives of our brother Knights in each of our councils. In a word, we must unite in fraternal charity

in putting our faith in action. May the Spirit inspire you to share the guidebook with your bishops, for when they see range and kinds of things we intend to do, then they will be reminded that we truly are there to support the Church's mission. May the Spirit also inspire you as you share the guidebook with your team, regarding it not just as a planning manual but as a plan of action— which our Grand Knights should also share with their pastors - . . . as we lead the way in organizing holy hours, arrange for groups of Knights to study Bishop Olmstead's "Into the Breach", support the global wheelchair mission and habitat for humanity, unite in supporting the Christian Refugee fund - all this and so much more. Just as there is a variety of spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit, so too the Knights provide a variety of ways in which we deploy those gifts for the common good of the Church, the Body of Christ.

## **Conclusion**

As we go forth, may the words of St. Augustine ring in our ears and resonate in our hearts:

"Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit  
that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit,  
that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,  
that I may love what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,  
to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,  
that I always may be holy. Amen."

Vivat Jesus!