

A Pentecost Card?

June 5, 2022

Gospel of John 14.15-16, 23b-26

Fr. John

While most of us in the past have either sent or received Christmas cards and to a lesser extent Easter cards. I doubt if any of you have ever sent or received a Pentecost card. I know I have not.

Why is it that Pentecost seems like a poor 'third cousin', to Christmas and Easter. Is it because it doesn't have the secular appeal of a Santa Claus or an Easter bunny and the greeting card industry has not seen it as a lucrative financial investment?

Perhaps in a religious sense it doesn't convey the same emotional response which a Christmas crèche scene or an empty tomb on Easter Sunday morning might evoke.

Pentecost seems to lack many of these strong visual symbols of our faith tradition [even though we might try our best with doves and tongues of flame.]

Deep down, however I have the feeling that there is another reason.

Both Christmas and Easter focus on Jesus and it becomes too easy to simply cheer him on in admiration from the sidelines - much like the crowds in Jerusalem waving palm branches on his entry into the city.

Pentecost is different. Here - it is **we** who are in the spotlight. The ball is now 'in our court'. Jesus has completed his earthly mission. He has shown us the human face of God and directed our attention to what the Creator intended for us to become as human beings.

Last Sunday we celebrated the Ascension - Jesus' final departure in his historical bodily form - leaving his disciples wondering what they were going to do. He left them with the puzzling promise that he must go away in order that he might come back to them - but in a different way. Perhaps many of us have experienced that sense of loss and abandonment when we have lost a dearly loved one. And in our grieving we don't know how we are going to carry on. We find ourselves in a kind of spiritual 'no man's land' and like the disciples we can lock ourselves away in fear, desolation and even despair like Job in the Old Testament.

But our God is too loving to set us adrift. Today we celebrate the manner in which He comes to us now through that mysterious Holy Spirit that can now work **within us**. And while we cannot visualize that Spirit like we can with Jesus, yet we know and can identify the effects or fruits of that Spirit – charity, peace, patience, joy, endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, and chastity.

When these are evident in ourselves, and in our community - we don't need to draw any pictures of what the Spirit may or may not look like because we ourselves become the vessels of that Spirit.

St. Paul in today's second reading goes to great pains to describe how that Spirit dwells within us. We are no longer spectators cheering from the sidelines. We have entered the playing field and participating in the great enterprise of living life and building the Kingdom.

Yes it's a bit scary that God would entrust us with such a task. But it's also exciting to know that we are not alone. We walk with each other guided by that same Spirit.

With this Mass we conclude the season of Easter and enter into the season of the Holy Spirit - the season in which we are now called to exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit - wisdom, knowledge, counsel, understanding, fortitude, reverence, and a sense of awe and wonder in the Lord.

We need not be sending out Pentecost greeting cards after all, because we are those very cards of greeting.