

Pentecost Sunday
Homily by Deacon Jim Olshefski
May 31, 2020

A revolution can be defined as an event that has a dramatic, wide-spread, transformative impact.

One example is the revolution that began 581 years ago, in the year 1439. In that year, Johannes Gutenberg, introduced mechanical moveable type and so began a **printing revolution** that ushered in the modern era. His innovation played a key role in the development of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Age of Enlightenment, and the scientific revolution. Additionally, he laid the material basis for the modern knowledge-based economy and the wide-spread education of people throughout the world.

And from the time that he printed his first Gutenberg Bible, an estimated 5 BILLION copies of the Bible have been published, making the Bible the most published book in history; more, by far, than Quotations from Chairman Mao and even more than Harry Potter!

Today we celebrate another **revolution**: Pentecost.

From the beginning, God offered his peace to all creation; peace, as described by St. Augustine, is the "tranquility of order." However, from Adam and Eve and continuing through the time of Noah, humanity rejected God's peace, acting as if human intellect and "free will" made us God's equals. By rejecting the peace that God offered, mankind was acting not as God desired, but as man wanted. When the people, once again, rebelled against God, by attempting to be God-like in building the tower at Babel, God had had enough; for even God has limits to his patience. At Babel, he "confused their [common] language," so "one will not understand what another says," and scattered the people all over the earth.

But, God, through his infinite mercy, forgave the people their rejection of his peace and **came down to us**, through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the son of God. In today's Gospel, the risen Jesus offers his disciples and us peace, with his first words upon entering the locked room: "Peace be with you." The peace which Jesus offers us is a profound peace that the world cannot give, a peace that drives away fear and binds all of creation together. This is the peace that God planned for creation in the beginning; the peace that was repeatedly rejected by mankind.

Through the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, God again offered his peace by reversing the confusion of language at Babel. The Holy Spirit enabled Jesus' disciples to

proclaim his Word, speaking of "the mighty acts of God" to all the people, which each understood "in his own language."

And the Word, through the Holy Spirit, continues to spread as evidenced by another **revolution**, which began 41 years ago this week, on the Vigil of Pentecost.

St. Pope John Paul II, returning to his native Poland for the first time since his papal election, ended his homily in Victory Square in Warsaw with the following words:

Let your Spirit descend.

Let your Spirit descend.

And renew the face of the earth,

The face of this land.

And the Spirit responded. John Paul's 9-day visit set-in-motion a "**revolution** of conscience" in that communist-suppressed country that led to the disintegration of the Soviet bloc and the tearing-down of the Berlin Wall, the Iron Curtain, 10 years later.

Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. The church is what she is because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, this Cathedral is Babel, an empty monument to ourselves. Without the Spirit, we could never be raised up and brought into covenant with the Lord. Without the Spirit, we are stagnant water, incapable of sustaining life.

On the other hand, when we recognize and cooperate with the Spirit, we realize that we are not competitors of God, but a people invited to his dwelling place—his mountain—to enter into a life-giving, loving relationship with him forever. With the Spirit, we are rescued as we call upon the name of the Lord; we become fertile and life-giving; we flow as the purest, cleanest water that comes down a fresh mountain stream.

So, utilizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit that have been given to each of us, let us unleash our own personal "**revolution** of conscience" as we echo the words of today's responsorial psalm and Saint John Paul: "Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth."