

Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's
The Church's Year

INSTRUCTION ON THE FESTIVAL OF PENTECOST



What festival is this?

It is the day on which the Holy Ghost descended in the form of fiery tongues, upon the apostles and disciples, who with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, were assembled in prayer in a house at Jerusalem. (Acts II.)

Why is this day called Pentecost?

The word "Pentecost" is taken from the Greek, and signifies fifty. As St. Jerome explains it, this was the last of the fifty days, commencing with Easter, which the early Christians celebrated as days of rejoicing at the resurrection of the Lord.

Why is this day observed so solemnly?

Because on this day the Holy Ghost, having descended upon the apostles, the law of grace, of purification from sin, and the sanctification of mankind, was for the first time announced to the world; because on this day the apostles, being filled with the Holy Ghost, commenced the work of purifying and sanctifying mankind, by baptizing three thousand persons who were converted by the sermon of St. Peter; and because on this day the Church of Jesus became visible as a community to the world, and publicly professed her faith in her crucified Saviour.

Why did the Holy Ghost descend on the Jewish Pentecost?

Because on their Pentecost the Jews celebrated the anniversary of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and God would show by sending the Holy Ghost on this days that the Old Law had ceased and the New Law commenced. God also chose this time, that the Jews who on this day came together from all countries to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pentecost, might be witnesses of the miracle, and hear the New Law announced by the apostles.

Why is the baptismal font blessed on the vigil of Pentecost, as on Holy Saturday?

Because the Holy Ghost is the Author of all sanctity and the Fountain of baptismal grace, and because in the Acts (i. 5.) the descent of the Holy Ghost itself is called a baptism.

In the Introit of the Mass the Church rejoices at the descent of the Holy Ghost and sings:

INTROIT The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth, allel.; and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice, Allel., allel., allel. (Wisd. I.7.) Let God arise, and his enemies be scattered: and let them that hate him, fly before his face. (Ps. 67.) Glory etc.

COLLECT God, who on this day didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit: grant us in the same spirit to relish what is right, and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Thro'. — in the unity of the same, etc.

LESSON (Acts II. I-II.) When the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak. Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, of every nation under heaven. And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue: and they were all amazed, and wondered, saying: Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? And how have we heard every man our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphilia, Egypt, and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians: we have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.

Why did the Holy Ghost come upon the apostles in the form of fiery tongues?

The appearance of fiery tongues indicated the gift of language imparted to the apostles by the Holy Ghost, and inflamed their hearts and the hearts of the faithful with the love of God and their neighbor.

Why did a mighty wind accompany the descent?

To direct the attention of the people to the descent of the Holy Ghost, and to assemble them to hear the sermon of the Apostle Peter.

What special effects did the Holy Ghost produce in the apostles?

He freed them from all doubt and fear; gave them His light for the perfect knowledge of truth; inflamed their hearts with the most ardent love, and incited in them the fiery zeal for the propagation of the kingdom of God, strengthened them to bear all sufferings and persecutions, (Acts V. 41.) and gave them the gift of speaking in various languages, and of discerning spirits.

GOSPEL (John XIV. 23-31,) At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words: and the word which you have heard is not mine, but the Father's, who sent me. These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you: but the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. You have heard that I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If you loved me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it came to pass, that when it shall come to pass you may believe. I will not now speak many things with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and in me he hath not anything. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath givers me commandment, so do I.

Why is the Holy Ghost expressly called "Holy," since this attribute is due to each of the divine persons?

Because He is the Author of inward sanctity and of all supernatural gifts and graces, and therefore to Him is especially ascribed the work of man's sanctification.

What does the Holy Ghost effect in man?

He enlightens him that he may know the truths of religion and salvation, and the beauty of virtue; He moves him to desire, to aim after and to love these things; He renews his heart by cleansing it from sin, and imparts to him the supernatural gifts and graces by which he can become sanctified, and He brings forth in him wonderful fruits of holiness.

What are the gifts of the Holy Ghost?

According to the Prophet Isaias they are seven: 1. The gift of wisdom, which enables us to know God, to esteem spiritual more than temporal advantages, and to delight only in divine things. 2. The gift of understanding, by which we know and understand that which our faith proposes to our belief; children and adults should pray fervently for this gift, especially before sermons and instructions in the catechism. 3. The gift of counsel, which gives us the knowledge necessary to direct ourselves and others when in doubt, a gift particularly necessary for superiors, for those about choosing their state of life, and for married people who live unhappily, and do not know how to help themselves. 4. The gift of fortitude, which strengthens us to endure and courageously overcome all adversities and persecutions for virtue's sake. 5. The gift of knowledge, by which we know ourselves, our duties, and how to discharge them in a manner pleasing to God. 6. The gift of piety, which induces us to have God in view in all our actions, and infuses love in our hearts for His service. 7. The gift of the fear of the Lord, by which we not only fear the just punishment, but even His displeasure at every sin, more than all other things in the world.

Which are the fruits of the Holy Ghost?

As St. Paul (Gal. V., 22-23.) enumerates them, they are twelve: 1. Charity. 2. Joy. 3. Peace. 4. Patience. 5. Benignity. 6. Goodness. 7. Longanimity. 8. Mildness. 9. Faith. 10. Modesty. 11. Continency. 12. Chastity. To obtain these fruits as well as the gifts of the Holy Ghost, we should daily say the prayer: "Come, O Holy Ghost, etc."

Why does Christ say: The Father is greater than I?

Christ as God is in all things equal to His Father, but as Christ was at the same time Man, the Father was certainly greater than the Man-Christ.

Why does Christ say: I will not now speak many things with you?

Christ spoke these words a short time before His passion, and by them He wished to say that the time was near at hand when Satan, by his instruments, the wicked Jews, would put Him to death, not because Satan had this power over Him, but because He Himself wished to die in obedience to the will of His Father.