



PENTECOST MESSAGE TO CATHOLIC MOVEMENTS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Spiritual realities are usually so sublime that we only understand them not by speaking about them directly, but by using images and allusions. Jesus was a master at this, especially when it came to speaking about the Kingdom of God. In fact, the Kingdom of God was the object of his parables. “To what can I compare it?” He asks (Mark 4:30). It is like a mustard seed, the smallest of seeds; it is like yeast that a woman mixed with measures of flour; it is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. These images challenge the listener to ponder the qualities and characteristics of the image itself, and then to grasp the meaning of the spiritual realities they reflect.

As we celebrate the solemnity of Pentecost 2021, let us linger a while on the action of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community. We speak of Pentecost as “the birthday of the Church”. The earliest disciples, who had encountered Jesus during his time on earth, had sufficient teachings and instructions to continue His mission on earth. But they lacked the Spirit. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, they had the confidence and courage to proclaim Jesus and His message. The Church was indeed born.

The eminent Bishop and theologian St. Irenaeus of Lyons (130-202 AD) uses a fine image in speaking about the formation of the Church: *“Like dry flour, which cannot become one lump of dough, one loaf of bread, without moisture, we who are many could not become one in Christ Jesus without the water that comes down from heaven.”* What water might that be? Irenaeus goes on to say, *“Through the baptism that liberates us from change and decay, we have become one in body; through the Spirit we have become one in soul.”*

Brothers and sisters, let us hold these images close to our heart. Jesus prayed that we may all be One in Him. This unity with the Risen Lord is our source of hope as we continue to face the challenges of the pandemic. We likewise receive hope through the solidarities of our communities. The differences of language and culture that distinguished Christian communities in the early Church did not keep them apart. We see in contemporary society (and sadly, in the Church in some quarters) unsettling cracks that arise from ideologies and alliances. “I’m for Paul.” “I’m for Apollos.” (1 Cor. 3:4) And who is for Christ? Only those who are imbued with the true Spirit of Jesus Himself.

During these days of Pentecost, let us be of one mind and one heart. There is but one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. (Ephesians 4:5)

Standing Committee for Relations with Movements and Associations
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

Pentecost 2021