

## The Solemnity of Pentecost: The Power to Continue the Work

I want to start off today by reminding you about the Biblical verses of Elijah and his protégé, Elisha. Elijah was the most powerful prophet in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. He was a prophet who warned and punished the Kings of Israel for their sins. He called on God to begin a drought. He called on God to end the drought. He destroyed the false prophets of the pagan god Baal on Mount Carmel after he challenged them to a contest to demonstrate who was the true God, Yahweh or Baal. He raised a widow's son from the dead. He even outran King Ahab's chariot. There are many accounts in the *First Book of Kings* of Elijah's power. Then at the beginning of the *Second Book of Kings*, Elijah was taken into heaven. He had been told to anoint Elisha as a prophet to succeed him. Elisha journeyed with Elijah witnessing the power that God manifested through him. In the second chapter of the *Second Book of Kings*, Elijah and Elisha were in Gilgal. Elijah told Elisha that God was summoning him to go to Bethel, but Elisha should stay in Gilgal. Elisha said that he would not leave him. They came to the Jordan River. Again Elijah told Elisha to stay there as he crossed over the Jordan. Again, Elisha said that he would not leave him. Elijah took off his mantle, or cloak and struck the water. It divided in two and the Elijah and Elisha crossed the river on dry ground. Then Elijah turned to Elisha and asked, "What is it that you want of me?" Elisha responded, "May I receive a double portion of your spirit." Elijah responded, "If you see me taken from you, your wish will be granted." Then a fire chariot and fiery horses came between the two. And in a whirlwind, Elijah was taken up to heaven. But before he was out of Elisha's sight, his mantle fell down to the earth. Elisha picked up the mantle, went back to the Jordan River and struck it. And the river again divided into two. Elisha had received the power of Elijah. Throughout his life, Elisha continued the work of his Master, Elijah.

One far greater, infinitely greater, than Elijah came to the world. His name was Jesus. You know well his deeds, and the power of his words. When it was time for him to rejoin his Father, he promised his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit and they would continue His work in the world. So, on Pentecost Sunday, the disciples of the Lord waited in that same Upper Room where they had celebrated the Last Supper. The door was barred because they were afraid that the leaders of the Jewish people would arrest them as they had arrested Jesus. What must it have been like in that room? They were obviously afraid. Were they trying to understand the significance of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord? Probably. Were they trying to understand what their role would be in continuing the work of the Lord? Certainly.

Then the Spirit came upon them. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit to bring others to Christ and Christ to others. They threw open the door and proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ. People from all over the world listened to them, hearing them in their own languages. They were inspired to become disciples of Christ. That day, three thousand joined the disciples.

Pentecost is the empowering by the Master, Jesus Christ, to complete his work, the salvation of that part of creation made in the image of the Father, Son and Holy

Spirit. Jesus entrusted his work to his prized disciples. He gave them the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and they allowed his Spirit to flow through them. And the Church was born. And the Church is being born. And the work of the master continues.

The disciples became apostles on Pentecost Sunday. The learners, disciples, were empowered by the Holy Spirit to become missionaries, apostles. Their faith in Jesus Christ was confirmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the same for us. When we received the sacrament of confirmation, we were confirmed in the faith of our Baptism. Just as Baptism can be called a Personal Easter, Confirmation can be called a Personal Pentecost.

How can we utilize this great gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit? How, can we allow the Spirit to work through us? How can we bring Christ to others and others to Christ?

First of all, we need to be thoroughly committed to our union with Christ. This is far more than avoiding serious sin. We need to foster our union with Christ through our prayer life, daily as individuals and at least weekly as a community. If we do this then our proclamation of Christ flows naturally through us. The things we say or do actually become secondary to the action of the Spirit through us.

Second, we need to reach out to those in the world who are longing for a Savior. This is not limited to those who have never heard of Christ. It also refers to those leading desperate lives of insignificant drudgery. It refers to those who are caught up in the dictates of secular society, busy doing all sorts of things that fade away except the one thing that lasts, uniting themselves to the Lord.

Thirdly, we need to fight against our own reticence. We might hesitate to ask someone to pray with us, fearing that the person might say, "No". Maybe we are afraid that we will not be convincing enough. We need to remember that God supplies the words and actions that lead others to Him. We are merely the vehicles for the Lord. At the same time, a vehicle is useless if it stays in the garage. We need to do our best, and let the Spirit do the rest.

How is it that we are all here in church? How is it that billions celebrate Jesus Christ? Was there a huge miracle that caused so many to become Christians? Was there a sign in the sky that said, "Go to Church?" Of course not. We are here because the Holy Spirit worked through others. I am here because others, particularly in my case as in most your cases, my parents, took their Catholicism seriously. I am here, as you are, because others have led me to Christ.

God uses His People to spread his Gospel. He empowers them with His Spirit, inspiring them and others through them to choose Christ. God uses us to do the work of His Kingdom. He has empowered us with the Holy Spirit.

The mantle has fallen from the sky. We are called to pick it up, strike the Jordan River and witness the power of God. May we have the courage to continue the work of

our Master.