

Pentecost Sunday
May 20, 2018
Fr. Rick Lorenz

Reflection

The priests of the archdiocese gathered this week for a pastoral day. We heard a number of presentations. The talks shared the theme of reconciliation leading to unity: with indigenous peoples, with the environment. There was also table with books they were giving away. I walked away with "The Cloud of Unknowing"; the "Divine Comedy" by Dante about hell, purgatory and heaven; and a novel by Cardinal John Newman called "Callista". These works, and many others, comprise our patrimony; our spiritual inheritance. Spiritual reading is an event in our life that contains truth, even if it's not THE truth. We cannot say these books are revelation; we do not hold them as Scripture; they are not venerated as the word of God. They're not the Bible, which "firmly, faithfully, and without error teach[es] that truth which God [wishes to confide], for the sake of our salvation (107)." But these books can help us to receive the truth; they can prepare us to accept what faith reveals. Because it does take time for us grow in knowledge and faith. We have to step through the obstacles that confront us. Circumstance, choice and consequence: these fill the pages of our lives. But the Holy Spirit is always present: some combination of author and character, setting and audience, moral and conclusion. I think St. Therese of Lisieux would agree. She called her autobiography, "The Story of a Soul."

Acts 2:1-11
Ps 104
1 Cor 12:3B-7, 12-13
Jn 15:26-27, 16:12-15

In his third letter, John says, "There is much more that I had in mind to write you, but I do not wish to write it out with pen and ink. Rather, I hope to see you soon, when we can talk face to face (3 Jn 13-14)." Maybe you also have a pile of books that you'll never get to. All of our relationships are limited on this earth by time and space. We remember that when kids say goodbye for the summer, when a child grows up and leaves home, when someone won't come home from the hospital. John's words echo Jesus at the Last Supper: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." Bittersweet. Bitter with the awareness of looming separation, but sweet with the hope of a deeper contact to come. No goodbye is forever. Kids will see each other in September, a little taller with stories to share. Children come home for holidays, grown into adults. The resurrection awaits us all, with glorified bodies unbound and eternal, with all stories plain to see. And the Holy Spirit is constant throughout, steadfast in creation, faithful in renewal.

Today is Pentecost Sunday. The first reading tells how the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles with "a sound like the rush of a violent wind." Or like a murmuring crowd, amplified to the cacophony of Babel. "Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them." Through the power of the Holy Spirit they could speak to Jews from every nation in their own language "about

God's deeds of power." Diversity was aligned; given one direction and unity; the peoples made one in Christ. Jesus fulfilled the promise he made at the Last Supper: "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf." The event of Pentecost was visible for a moment, but recorded for the ages. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ." Pentecost was visible for a moment, but brought into effect for the life of the Church. "As individual men who received the Holy Spirit in those days could speak in all kinds of tongues, so today the Church, united by the Holy Spirit, speaks in the language of every people (LOH II, 1006)." This was written by an unknown African author in fifth century. It was true then, and remains true today. All our stories are united in Christ; they are the work of the Lord that let him rejoice. "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." For this Eucharist, we thank God for the Spirit that lets us live, one and free in Christ.