

“Many Instruments, One Symphony in Christ”

Pentecost [A]

Acts 2:1-11; Ps 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31,34; 1 Cor 12:3B-7, 12-13; Jn 20:19-23

Like many people, I enjoy listening to a symphony orchestra.

- I’m by no means a connoisseur of fine music
 - having only played a few instruments in my childhood years
- But I do have a great appreciation for the symphony
- The way it can move you, speaking without words
 - It can be enthralling, evoking a whole range of feelings
 - from somber reflection to the vigor of a patriotic march.
- It’s often interesting to get to a concert early enough to hear some of the warm-ups
 - where you can listen to individual musicians and sections
 - playing scales or particular stanzas.
 - And I always notice just how profoundly different the instruments are:
 - The varieties and range of sounds they produce
 - And their relative volume:
 - The percussion and brass can be so loud
 - And the woodwinds and strings so relatively soft
 - That you might wonder how some of them will be heard at all...
 - But of course, under the guidance of the conductor
 - These vastly different instruments
 - playing different notes at different times,
 - each contributing in its own special way,
 - it all comes together perfectly in one magnificent piece!
 - The beautiful symphony orchestra:
 - many parts, yet one body in music...

Today we celebrate Pentecost – one of the great feast days of the year

- commemorating the birth of our Church
- where, in quite dramatic form with the sound of rushing wind and tongues of fire
 - the Holy Spirit of Almighty God was poured out on the Apostles and other followers of Christ -- just as Jesus had promised.
- For 33 yrs God had graced mankind with His presence in the person of Jesus Christ.
 - And before returning to Heaven

- Jesus promised he would not leave us as orphans (Jn 14:18)
- that He would send His Holy Spirit to be with us.

As He did so, we see in this feast some of the beautiful timing,

an overarching spiritual rhythm (if you will) of our God

- Pentecost occurring 50 days after Easter
 - mirrors an ancient Jewish feast celebrated 50 days after Passover
- That ancient Jewish celebration was a festival
 - thanking God for the gift of Spring crops
 - Today we celebrate gifts of the Holy Spirit
- In the Gospel we read that Jesus breathed on the Apostles
 - recalling how the Lord also breathed life into Adam (Gen 2:7)
- We read of the tongues of fire that rested on the Apostles --
 - the fire of the HS that purifies our hearts, and sheds light to our paths --
 - and we remember God presenting Himself to Moses in the burning bush (Ex 3:2)
 - and leading his people thru the desert by night in a pillar of fire (Ex 13:21)
- Then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles spoke in tongues
 - which can harken us back to the Tower of Babel
 - where God used multiple languages to confuse
 - and scatter the family of man.
 - Now the Holy Spirit again uses multiple languages
 - this time to gather the peoples into a family of God...

These are but a few examples of how -- throughout the whole of Scripture really --

- we see a rhythm & harmony in our God's interactions with humankind.

What we celebrate about Pentecost is not just the

- outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles some 2,000 years ago
- but an outpouring upon all Christians thru present day.
- We encounter Him in many ways, but most especially thru the Sacraments.
 - Indeed tomorrow at the Noon Mass, we can witness a miracle
 - at the hands of Bishop Higgins (Archdiocese of Military Service)
 - as the Holy Spirit will descend upon 34 of our youth
 - just as He did on the Apostles in today's Scripture readings.

The Holy Spirit is Almighty God in the Third Person of the Holy Trinity and has many titles.

- To name but a few:
 - He is our Teacher, our Guide, our Advocate, our Counselor, our Intercessor
 - He is the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of holiness
 - the Spirit of life, of glory, of wisdom & understanding,
 - Spirit of judgment & fire, the Spirit of Peace
- The Holy Spirit is all of this and more AND He chooses to dwell within us!
- Indeed He is what unites our many parts into One Body in Christ.
 - And when Scripture as in today's second reading
 - speaks of us being *many parts, but one Body of Christ* (1 Cor 12:12)
 - that is no mere metaphor for the Church and her union with Christ
 - It is a metaphysical reality
 - Every Christian is truly united to each other,
 - and further united to Christ by the Sacraments

The Holy Spirit gives each of us a variety of different gifts,

- meant to be shared in order to build up the Body of Christ.

He gives us many instruments (if you will) to play in His Symphony of Love to the world

And my brothers & sisters, the world desperately needs to hear the music of God's Love, amen?

There's a lot of pain & suffering in this world and so we naturally seek to escape it.

- To this yearning of mankind Jesus says,
 - "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life..." (Jn 14:6)

But drumbeat of Satan beats loudly...

- and the Evil One has been quite successful in tricking many of us into believing
 - that our peace does not come from Christ
 - but rather from satiating the desires of the body & mind...
 - Do what you want, when you want, as much as you want
 - If it feels good do it; if it tastes good eat it; if it numbs the pain take it...

The Holy Spirit thru the Church tries desperately to teach us those are dead-end streets

- But many of our friends and a vast majority of media
 - and sometimes even our classrooms...
 - teach us otherwise...

- And so we travel down these roads – as individuals and as a society
 - and we do find Pleasure. It feels good so this must be a good thing,
 - and we travel onward.
 - But inevitably that feeling of pleasure fades...
 - And we want to recapture that pleasure
 - so we travel yet another dead-end road, and another, and another...
 - deeper and deeper into the abyss
 - sometimes for decades or perhaps our entire lives.
 - And if Satan plays you right, you lose your soul along the way...

Pleasure itself is not necessarily a bad thing,

- though some forms of pleasure are certainly bad.
- But even healthy pleasure eventually fades away...
 - for all pleasure is fleeting...
 - And certainly any pleasure of the mind or body
 - is infinitely more shallow and unfulfilling
 - when compared to Peace in the depths of our soul.
 - and that Peace my brothers & sisters
 - comes only from our God.

The slippery seductions to take these dead-end streets is constant, ever-adapting,

- and often with a bulls-eye on our youth.
- Just this week I heard about a Plastic Surgery game for kids, so I looked it up.
 - I quickly found a free app targeted at young girls.
 - It's own ad says, *"If makeup can't give the beauty you want..."*
 - and *"You can turn into a Victoria's Secret model..."*
 - The girls get to be the Plastic Surgeon to "help" other poor souls
 - by giving them a "nip & tuck" or nose job, or other "enhancements" ...
 - The not-so-subtle self-image messaging here
 - especially targeting young girls, is shameful.
- Drug & alcohol abuse and related deaths continue to climb
 - In particular, Heroin overdoses & deaths remain at truly epidemic levels
 - Those in their 30's seem to be the most susceptible to this scourge.
- Pornography addiction – remains at crisis levels across the country
 - Millions of men (and women, and teens) are addicted to this powerful drug
 - with thousands upon thousands of broken relationships & families as a result.

- Suicide crisis – I recently found an interesting article on WebMD (a well-respected health website) called *Reasons Why Parents Should be Wary of '13 Reasons Why'*
 - “13 Reasons Why” is a Netflix series that came out this Spring
 - If you’ve never heard of it, odds are your teens have
 - as it’s apparently hugely popular
 - and graphically explores why & how a teenager took her own life.
 - In their article they remind us that:
 - Suicide remains the number two cause of death for teens 15+
 - The rate of teens with suicidal thoughts or self-harm seen in U.S. emergency rooms -- has doubled in the last 10 years
 - But the crux of the article is that Mental Health experts
 - are warning parents to be wary of this series
 - and advise that if you let your children watch it at all,
 - you should definitely be watching it with them
 - to counter some of the misnomers that are presented
 - and otherwise be available for appropriate discussion.
 - <http://www.webmd.com/parenting/news/20170504/reasons-why-parents-should-be-wary-of-13-reasons-why#1>

These are but a few of the symptoms of a world

- running down dead-end streets -- desperately seeking Peace – and not finding it.
- A world ironically not hearing or otherwise ignoring the message of Christ
 - the only way to true Peace.

And just one more example because it’s Confirmation weekend...

- and it’s a huge pet peeve of mine:
- The problem of the mindset that Confirmation = Graduation
 - A significant percentage of teens being Confirmed this year
 - (including those at our own parish), Once Confirmed
 - they will no longer attend Youth functions at all,
 - and their Mass attendance will fall to next to nothing.
 - And parents are complicit in that they allow it.
 - Friends & loved ones are complicit
 - if they don’t say anything about it
 - and try to lead them back.
 - With all the very real spiritual dangers out there in our world
 - it is unconscionable that parents would allow this...
 - And it tells me – for parents and kids alike –

- that it’s all “up here” and not so much “down here”
- A check in the box vice a way of life indicative
 - of a true personal relationship with Christ.
- I’m not just talking about trying to prevent our kids from “getting into trouble” (which I’m sure we all care greatly about)
- I’m talking about the state of their souls
 - which we should care infinitely more about...

Today we are reminded & celebrate that

- We as a Church have many parts
 - yet we are One Body in Christ
 - united by the Holy Spirit.
- We have been given gifts
 - for the purpose of building up the Body of Christ

We should live our lives like we are members of God’s Grand Symphony

- each with specific instruments and talents
- with specific music specialized just for you
- each of us called to play a part
- Sometimes our Conductor will have you play loudly,
 - sometimes softly, and sometimes you’ll rest.
- Practice your gift, play with all your skill.
- For when we do, when we all play our part:
 - To a lost and lonely world...
 - it will bring a beautiful Symphony of God’s Love & Mercy & Peace.

Come Holy Spirit,

- *fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love*
- *Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.*
- *And You shall renew the face of the earth... Amen.*

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