

## Homily - Jn.20: 19-23

### Pentecost Sunday

04/ 05 June 2022 – Sooeey / Riverstown

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In a mother's womb were two babies. One asked the other: "Do you believe in life after delivery?" The other replied, "Why, of course! There has to be something after delivery. Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what we will be later." "Nonsense" said the first. "There is no life after delivery. What kind of life would that be?" The second said, "I don't know, but there will be more light than we have here right now. Maybe we will walk with our legs and eat from our mouth. Maybe we will have other senses that we can't understand now." The first replied, "That is absurd. Walking is impossible. And eating with our mouths? Ridiculous! The umbilical cord supplies nutrition and everything we need. But the umbilical cord is so short. Life after delivery is to be logically excluded." The second insisted, "Well I think there is something, and maybe it's different from life here. Maybe we won't need this physical cord anymore." The first replied, "Nonsense. And moreover, if there is life, then why has no one ever come back from there? Delivery is the end of life, and in the after-delivery there is nothing but darkness and silence and oblivion. It takes us nowhere." "Well, I don't know," said the second, "but

certainly we will meet our Mother and she will take care of us.” The first replied “Mother? You actually believe in Mother? That’s laughable. If Mother exists, then where is She now?” The second said.” She is all around us. We are surrounded by Her. We are of Her. It is in Her that we live. Without Her this world would not and could not exist.” Said the first: “Well I don’t see her, so it is only logical that she doesn’t exist.” To which the second replied, “Sometimes, when you’re in silence and you focus and listen, you can hear Her loving voice, calling down from above.” —

Well! Today we celebrate the beginnings of the Church, the great feast of Pentecost: a day when Jesus, true to His promise, sent His Spirit on the apostles encircling them, working with them and empowering them. “Before Pentecost, the disciples were unsure of what they were to do next, and spent most of their time in hiding. After Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit, they understood their mission to spread the Good News of Jesus, and they had the courage to come out of their hiding and speak openly about who Jesus was, and what He had accomplished by his dying and rising.

In the Hebrew Tradition, going back to the book of Leviticus, Pentecost was one of the 3 great feasts. They have the Passover, the Tabernacles and then the Pentecost. Now, Pentecost literally means 50<sup>th</sup>. It is a

feast celebrated on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Passover feast by the Jews, and in Christianity; Pentecost is celebrated on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the feast of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Now, Jesus had just been arrested and crucified as a criminal. And the disciples self-isolated from fear of the Jews. And here the Risen Jesus enters the still locked Upper Room where the disciples were, and He stood among them, not in His glory; but as the Jesus of the Passion showing them His hands, His feet and His side; the wounds that He had.

And the first thing He says to His disciples is this: “Peace, be with you”. Immediately after that He tells them: “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you”.

Then Jesus empowers them by breathing upon them saying: Receive the Holy Spirit. And He goes on to say: “For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.” Though these words directly refer to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we need to remember that they also remind us of the Christian vocation we all have: to love and forgive as we have been loved and forgiven.

Well! The apostles were changed men after Pentecost and the change that occurred in them was due to the coming of the Holy Spirit. Prior to His coming they were living in hiding in the upper room. They were filled with

fear, and were gripped by a terrible sense of failure and inadequacy. And they weren't confident about sharing the Gospel with others. But then, Pentecost came and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. No longer were the disciples confused, no longer were they timid. The Spirit launched them into the world to be witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus and to preach His Good News to everyone.

Now, when we look at our own lives, we realize that there are times we too have been hiding in fear behind locked doors, just like the apostles; times when we just don't see how we can cope with our pain, grief and loss. And to a certain extent we cannot cope if we simply rely on our own efforts. But Pentecost says: we are not alone. The Holy Spirit is still with us and within us; encircling us, working with us, commissioning us and empowering us.

Well, let me conclude with a little anecdote.

A little girl was visiting her grandmother in a small country town in the Southern United States. They attended a very emotional religious service, where people expressed their feelings by jumping about and shouting; it was what we might call a "Holy Roller" service. The little girl asked her grandmother if all that jumping meant the Holy Spirit was really there. Her grandmother said. "Honey, it doesn't matter how high

they jump up! It's what they do when they come down that will tell you if it's the real thing!"

Well, dear friends, it would be good if we were a little more enthusiastic about our religion, but what matters is what we do in everyday life. May be, on this solemnity of Pentecost, we need to ask ourselves this question: Does the Holy Spirit have a practical effect on our daily life? If so, in what way?

Let this feast be a moment of encounter, and a moment of conversion for each of us. God bless you all, **Amen.**