

Sunday Homily

PENTECOST SUNDAY

31 MAY 2020

YEAR A

“Receive the Holy Spirit.”

John 20:22

Illustration

For years ecologists have lobbied governments to invest in renewable energy sources, conscious of the finite nature of earth’s resources of fuel. Experiments have take place harnessing the energy of the tides, using it to power generators, producing electricity for heat and light. The sun is already the principal source of energy for our planet, and scientists are constantly devising new ways of using its energy in the factory, street and home. Wind farms utilise each gust of wind to turn giant rotor arms, echoing the action of windmills, widely used by previous generations for a variety of tasks. Energy is all around us, energy sustains us, energy changes us – energy is life.

In years gone by people would hold a mirror to the mouth of a dying person. If there was breath, it would form a mist on the mirror and would show that the person was still alive. The “kiss of life” would be more appropriately designated the “breath of life”.

The shortage of earth’s resources has made us more conscious of what saves and sustains life, and the best example of energy indicating life is in the breath of each living person.

Gospel Teaching

The risen Jesus breathed on the disciples, a sign that he was sharing his life, his energy, with them. As he breathed on them he said: “Receive the Holy Spirit.” The very energy and life of God was being given to them; but no one can receive the Spirit of God and remain unchanged. The disciples discovered they were able to speak in foreign tongues. They found a courage they had never known before in preaching the Good News, and they lived in a unity that only weeks before would have seemed like a dream. With the energy of God flowing through them, they showed new life and growth. This new life of the Spirit had come to them when they were at their lowest ebb, shut away in a room, paralysed by fear, confused and disillusioned.

The breath of Christ, the Holy Spirit of God, was indeed new life, energy and growth, and its gift did not simply confer new life on the disciples, but the life of Christ. In a new way Christ came close to his disciples, calling them together

in communion, sending them far and wide on his mission. With his Spirit living in them the disciples became, in a new way, his people, his messengers, his body. Wherever they were, he would be, too, and this gift of the Spirit is with his disciples in every age.

Application

It is an enriching exercise to become aware of the energy and life in the people and the world around us. Everything we encounter is imbued with life, a life so wonderful and mysterious and complex that it defies scientific definition. The movement of the earth around the sun, the spinning of our planet, which brings us night and day, the breath of the wind across the face of the earth, the warmth of fire, the radiance of light, growing plants and flowing streams: all are signs of an energy which gives and sustains life.

Awareness of this energy and life creates awareness of the Holy Spirit of God, who moves around freely, giving life and growth to the world and the potential for peace, forgiveness and love among its people. Becoming aware of the Spirit, we become attuned to it, sensing its presence and opening ourselves to its power, to live in accordance with its force for good. We start to live in that same energy which caused the heavens and earth to be made. We, like the disciples, become energised for the work of God and dynamic messengers of the Good News.

The Christian messenger does not simply bring Christ to others, but identifies the presence of God already in existence. We demonstrate that where there is goodness, it is Christ's goodness; where there is healing and forgiveness, it is Christ's healing and forgiveness. We show people where Christ is already active in their lives and in this way, in concert with the Holy Spirit, we build up the body of Christ.

What tremendous energy was released on that first Pentecost! What tremendous energy is still released into the Church by the Holy Spirit so that we, today's disciples, may work in communion with each other, renewing the face of the earth.