

This feast of Pentecost is one that is rich in spiritual meaning.

The word itself simply means 50, 50 days after Easter. It is the feast of the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of peace, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness and wholeness, who brings wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and the fear of the Lord.

That is all very fine but who exactly is this Holy Spirit?

In Latin this person was called Sanctus Spiritus, which for a long time was translated as Holy Ghost in English but the Latin word Spiritus does not mean ghost, it rather means Breath, indeed a gentle breath of wind.

We are celebrating Holy Breath. There are not many things that we can be absolutely sure of, but there is one certainty for me at this precise moment, everyone here is breathing. Can we do a little exercise?

Let us concentrate for a moment and all together breath in slowly and exhale slowly. O.K. let's do it.

Breathe in-----breathe out. Again, breathe in-----breathe out.

We experience the action, we experience an expansion in our lungs but we cannot see the air (unless it be a frosty morning) we cannot see the breath, the Spiritus, but it gives us life, it is essential for life and it is totally natural.

Pentecost is about God breathing, the Holy Breathing, totally natural for God, but invisible to us.

This Holy Breath is absolutely essential for our spiritual life, without it we are spiritually dead. We find it in all of Scripture. "In the beginning God created the heaven and earth. The earth was without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit (breath) of God moved upon the face of the waters."

"The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life".

On coming into the locked room, Jesus greets the Apostles: Shalom, Peace be with you, then he breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Receive the breath of God, come alive with the breath of God. You have been resuscitated, you were dead in your sins, paralyzed by fear but now come alive with my own life, my own breath, my own Spirit.

St. Paul tells us that we are dependent on the Holy Spirit for all the elements of our spiritual life, even its' most basic, the ability to say: "Jesus Christ is Lord." That proclamation is a statement that we are all one under one Lord, united under one Lord. It is a statement that though we may come from different countries, speak different languages, we are one in the same Spirit and that Spirit will help us to understand one another.

The Spirit of God is the great unifying power in our world. There is so much division, politically, culturally, religiously, even within our own church.

We are in a bad place right now. We desperately need C.P.R. administered by the Spirit, the breath of God giving new life to our world, but we must be open to that. As part of C.P.R. you breathe into an open mouth. If we are to receive C.P.R. from the Holy Spirit, we must have an open mind and heart, a recognition that we do not have to be all the same, a recognition that indeed we are not all the same, that,

as Paul insists, we have different gifts but that all can and should contribute to the building up of one body, because all are gifts of the one Spirit.

We, each one of us, have God's Spirit breath into us. In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, we were all given to drink of the one Spirit. If we Christians are to obey the command to go out to the whole world with a message of peace, then we must strive to be united.

We have different gifts, uniformity is not demanded but unity is and that is what we pray for today.

Unity in diversity, all breathing with the same breath of God, the Holy Spirit, all breathing Shalom, Peace.