

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

We hear these words from our Gospel reading again - **John chapter 14:27. “Peace I leave with you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”** So far the word of the Lord...

The word Pentecost means fifty. The feast of Pentecost was celebrated every year by the Jewish people fifty days after the feast of the Passover. Passover got its name when the Angel of Death passed through the land of Egypt during the final and greatest plague, killing the firstborn son in every home. But the Israelites were safe because they marked the doors of their homes with the blood of a lamb. When the angel saw the blood on their doors, he passed over their homes and they did not die. This was the first Passover. The next morning, God led His people out of slavery in Egypt to begin their journey to the promised land.

Fifty days after the first Passover, the Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. This was the first Pentecost. God gave Moses His Word. God had freed His people from slavery, but He wasn't done. He wanted to live among them. He wanted them to lead holy lives as His dear children. He wanted them to keep His Word.

In our Gospel reading Jesus says, **“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me” (John 14:23).**

To keep God's Word can be a difficult thing. It's a lot easier when we agree with what His Word says, but when we disagree with it... When our reason wants to rule over, rather than submit to God's Word, that - that can be challenging.

Consider our Old Testament reading in which the people disregarded God's command to **"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen 9:1)**. In rebellion they said, **"Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth" (Gen 11:4)**. Rather than calling upon the name of the Lord (Gen 4:6), they sought to make a name for themselves. Rather than filling the earth, they sought to stay together in one place. In building this tower, the people sought to ascend to God, but what they really needed was for God to descend to them.

You see, God wanted to live among His people. In order for a holy and sinless God to live with us, we must also be holy. That's why God gave his Law: **"Do this and live. You shall be holy even as I am holy" (1 Pet 1:16)**. What's the problem with that? God says, **"Keep my commandments and you will live."** It sounds great on paper, or on stone, and the Israelites were quick to promise, **"We will do all that the Lord our God has commanded!"** But what happened? They found, just as you and I find, that they were unable to do what they had promised. St. Paul writes, **"The good that I want to do, I don't do, and the evil that I don't want to do, I find myself doing" (Rom 7:19)**. Any Christian who is honest will admit the same. The Law of God shows us how to be holy, but it often seems that it has the opposite effect. It's not that there's a problem with the Law. The Law of God is perfect. But we aren't. So instead of showing the Israelites how they ought to live, it generally showed them how much they failed, how unholy they were. Can

you imagine celebrating this holiday every year? *“On this day, God gave us His Holy Law... which no one has ever kept perfectly and stands as a constant reminder of our sinfulness... yay?”*

With this in mind, it’s clear that the Day of Pentecost had to be about more than the day God gave us the Law that no one can keep. Fifty days after the crucifixion, fifty days after the true Passover lamb was slain, the true Day of Pentecost arrived. Jesus said, **“The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things” (John 14:26).** Thank God for that. We need a Helper, because if it were up to us to get right with God and enter heaven, we’d need a lot more than a tall tower. Not even the Ten Commandments can help us. They only show us how far we are off the mark. Thank God for the Day of Pentecost, in which the Helper is sent down from heaven to us.

And how does the Holy Spirit help us? Does He enable us to keep the Law perfectly, so that we can climb our way up to heaven? No. The Holy Spirit helps us by teaching us about Jesus, the only spotless Lamb, the only One who can and has kept God’s law perfectly. We believe this by faith, another gift of the Holy Spirit.

On the Day of Pentecost described in Acts chapter 2, there was fire and smoke and a great noise as God the Holy Spirit descended from heaven to be with His people. But on this day the message the people received was not the Law. It was the Gospel. The Law says, **“Do this and you will live.”** The Gospel says, *“Christ has already done it for you, so you shall live.”* When the Holy Spirit descends, He teaches us the words of Jesus. And what words are these? **“Peace I leave with you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).**

Today, on this celebration of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes to you by way of His spoken Word, read and preached today in your hearing. The Holy Spirit teaches. He teaches peace. He teaches the peace of Jesus. This is not the peace of the law. The peace of the law depends on you. It depends on your obedience. You must obey the law to find the peace with God that the law promises. You must climb up to God. You must love Him with your whole heart and love your neighbor as yourself. But you don't. No one who depends on the law to ascend to God will ever find true peace. The peace of Jesus is not the peace of the law. His peace rests solely in what He has done. True Passover is about His descent to us, His sacrifice, His blood, His death for us. **Isaiah 53:5** **“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”** Our enemy, Satan, lies crushed beneath His feet. Christ's victory stands once and for all.

And on the true Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends to live among men, teaching us to trust in the risen Lord Jesus, bringing His words to our remembrance, continuing to direct us to the Passover Lamb who bore the sins of the world. The Apostle Paul teaches us, **“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3)**. Indeed, the Holy Spirit alone can bring us to Christ, to confess Christ, and to believe in Christ. The Holy Spirit strengthens your faith through the body and blood of Jesus, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, the very body Jesus gave and the true blood He shed when He died on the cross for you, for me, and for the life of the world. He invites you to come to the Lord's altar to receive this gift on your lips. He invites you to taste and see that the Lord is good, just as those first Christians did beginning that Pentecost day. These Christians were already engaged in a form of liturgy that serves us well today, even in this expanded form almost two thousand years later: **“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’**

teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). And what happened? **“Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:46-47).** Yes, the Holy Spirit added members to the Church through His Means of Grace, even as He does so today by His feeding and teaching us, thanks be to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.