

Pentecost Sunday Mass during the Day

In the Acts of the Apostles today we are told that the crowd who heard the earliest disciples of Jesus understood them in his or her own language. Now that's clarity! It wasn't so much the gift of tongues the earliest disciples received as much as their hearers received the gift of ears, of listening.

When it comes to listening in the Church today, some people mistake mono for stereo, uniformity for unity. At the first Pentecost, the earliest Christians had no such difficulty; they knew that speaking the same language was not as important as was careful listening to one another.

The early Church was a very complex and diverse community. Like today they had their struggles with one another. Within a few years of the first Pentecost, there were fights between Peter and Paul over Jewish and Gentile converts. There were people who died for the faith and others who betrayed them to the authorities. Some Christians thought they were for Paul or Apollos rather than for Jesus, and still others thought the end of the world was nigh. Through it all, however, the bass notes played: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Second Vatican Council helped us recover the most ancient tradition in our faith, that in various, unexpected, and inculturated ways the Word of God has been present in all peoples, in every culture. We now hold that whenever the Gospel has been proclaimed in a new land, it compliments the best in that culture as well as correcting aspects of any culture which oppress, demean, and diminish the women and men within it.

In this process, what is born between Christ and an individual culture is an inculturated faith, which takes as seriously as the early Church did the context in which our faith is proclaimed and lived.

Pentecost faith holds that while we build our faith on that of all the believers who have gone before us, we have the responsibility to listen to our contemporary culture and put it into conversation with the Gospel. That's why courage is one of the Holy Spirit's pre-eminent gifts. We are not allowed to retreat from the world but are sent out to enter into conversation with it, and hear in this dialogue the symphony God is composing here and now between the treble of our daily life over the continuing bass line of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

Let's pray that this Pentecost Eucharist hones our ears as well as prepares our tongues to clearly receive and proclaim the Gospel of Christ in the market places of our own day and age.

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