

Whitsunday (2020)

(Acts 2:1-11, St. John 14:15-31)

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come...”

What effect does the presence of the Holy Ghost have upon our life?

A simple survey of the life of St. Peter gives us a good indication.

Prior to Pentecost, Peter was unsettled.

He was tossed to and fro; he was up and down, hot and cold.

Scripture gives us several examples of this.

In St. Matthew 16, Jesus asked the twelve *“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”* Various Apostles testified to different opinions, but it was St. Peter that rightly said *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

But then later, in that same chapter, when Jesus went on to explain that being ‘the Christ’ meant He would have to suffer and die, Peter said *“Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”* (NKJV)

The events that took place on the night of Jesus’ passion best show the wavering nature of St. Peter before Pentecost.

When Jesus first brought them to Gethsemane, Peter (and the others, but Jesus singled Peter out) fell asleep. Not once, not twice, but three times.

But then when Judas brought the temple guards and servants to the garden to arrest Jesus, Peter jumped into action and cut off the ear of Malchus, one of the servants, and had to be told by Jesus to put his sword away.

After Jesus had been taken, all the other Apostles fled, but Peter bravely followed and stood outside while Jesus was arraigned in the house of Annas. But while he stood there warming himself, he then denied Jesus three times.

Before Pentecost, St. Peter was at times bold and at other times timid.

At times he would state the truth and at other times fall into error.

At times he would be brave and at other times a coward.

Such is man’s nature without the Holy Ghost dwelling within.

But after Pentecost, St. Peter was much different.

He was no longer a man who waivered.

He was a man who was bold and brave, and spoke the truth consistently.

Today’s lesson from Acts 2 stops at verse 11, but the rest of that chapter tells us what occurred that day after the Apostles were endued with the Holy Ghost.

In verses 14-36 St. Peter preaches the first sermon of the Church.

He pulled no punches. He laid the blame for Jesus’ death right at the feet of His fellow Jews. (That charge is applicable to us all. Had we lived then, we would’ve done as they did.)

Peter’s words convicted many of his hearers (vs. 37 says they were *“pricked in the heart”*). They cried out *“What must we do to be saved?”* Peter boldly gave them the remedy for their sins: *“Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”* (v. 38)

Soon after that day, he (St. John with him) healed a lame man outside of the Temple and gave the glory to Jesus for the healing.

Again, St. Peter preached a bold and poignant sermon and for doing so both Apostles were arrested.

In Acts 4:8-12 St. Peter gives the first “apology” (defense) of the Catholic faith to the rulers of the Sanhedrin. V. 8 states *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them...”*

He concludes in v. 12 saying *“Neither is their salvation in any other [than Jesus]: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”*

Think about this. St. Peter said those words to the very same men who two months earlier arrested Jesus and put Him to death! Yet he was fearless. Why? Because he was filled with the power of the Holy Ghost.

Brethren, the day of Pentecost has fully come for us...

You and I have also been filled with the Holy Ghost.

We do not have to wait for anything else or anything more.

When we were baptized, His presence was infused into us, giving us a new nature, a nature that seeks to know Jesus and be one of His disciples.

When we were confirmed, we were sealed with the seven-fold gifts of the Spirit to be able to produce the nine gifts of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23)

Because we have received the Holy Ghost, our lives can be transformed like St. Peter's was. We can speak truth. We can be bold. We can be brave

We likely won't be called upon to testify to crowds and before rulers as St. Peter was.

But we are called to be truthful in the next decision we have to make and in the next difficult conversation we have.

We can be brave in the face of the next diagnosis our doctor gives us, or the next quarterly report our financial advisor provides us.

We can be bold the next time the Spirit leads us to do something we've not done before, maybe in a situation or in a place we've not been before; something that we may not be comfortable with.

Let us remember what Jesus told St. Peter after the resurrection...

In St. John 21:18 Jesus told him "*Verily, verily I say unto you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.*" (NKJV)

Before Pentecost, St. Peter sailed the Sea of Galilee doing as he pleased. Even after he started to follow Jesus, he could have left any time he wanted.

As Dcn. Hitchcock told us, in the first year of Jesus' ministry, the Apostles were only part-time disciples. Peter could have just stayed with his nets.

But after Pentecost that was no longer the case.

The Holy Ghost dwelled within Peter; leading him, urging him, compelling him to go the way and do the things he was being lead to do.

One day, Jesus' words were completely fulfilled. Peter stretched out his arms on a cross in the city of Rome and was crucified upside down.

Jesus has a plan for us as He did for St. Peter.

As we diligently seek Him, the Holy Ghost will reveal it to us, usually one step at a time, through the ups and downs, and twists and turns of life.

But Jesus has a cross for us too.

Our cross is different than St. Peter's. But it's certainly a cross that leads to death; the death of our self, our ego, our fears, our doubts.

Yet, it is a true cross none the less. Maybe for us, the truest of crosses...?

It is a cross us that draws us closer to Jesus.

We must take up that cross, our own cross, as St. Peter took up His own cross, and follow wherever the Holy Ghost leads us to.

And we can, because that is the effect the presence of the Holy Ghost has upon our lives.

In the name of the Father...Amen.