



# Bringing Home the Word

Pentecost | May 20, 2018

## The Breath of the Spirit

By Mary Katharine Deeley

When our children were toddlers, we played a game called Typhoon. It was simple—we looked intently into their eyes and then blew into their faces and said, “Typhoon.” Whether it was the breath blowing past them or the word itself, I am not sure, but they always widened their eyes, looked startled for a minute, and then started laughing.

The memory of this game comes unbidden when I read that Jesus blew on the disciples and commanded them to receive the Holy Spirit. I can imagine

that their eyes widened and they looked startled for a minute. Maybe one or two of them were tempted to laugh, but the enormity of what Jesus said next sobered them quickly. There was power in the Spirit Jesus breathed out: a power to forgive sins.

The Church uses this passage, among others, to support Christ’s institution of the sacrament of reconciliation, and so it is. In our reflection, though, we shouldn’t forget that we all are called to forgiveness in our relationships with one another.

While our forgiveness is not sacramental, it’s a measure of our life in the Spirit that’s poured out on the world at Pentecost. One of our great temptations is not to forgive but hold others bound because of our anger, fear, or plain stubbornness.

Remember, though, that forgiving others frees us as much as it frees them. In forgiving, we are no longer bound by hate, resentment, or feelings of vengeance. Rather, we show ourselves transformed in Christ by this immense gift of love. +

*We’re all called to forgiveness in our relationships with one another.*

## A Word From Pope Francis

As he did on Pentecost, the Lord wants to work one of the greatest miracles we can experience; he wants to turn your hands, my hands, our hands, into signs of reconciliation, of communion, of creation. He wants your hands to continue building the world of today.

—World Youth Day prayer vigil, July 30, 2016



## Sunday Readings

### Acts 2:1–11

Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them.

### 1 Corinthians 12:3b–7, 12–13 or Gal 5:16–25

As a body is one though it has many parts...so also Christ.

### John 20:19–23 or John 15:26–27; 16:12–15

[Jesus] breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the holy Spirit.”

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How often do I seek Mary’s intercession or help?
- Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. How can I practice more patience this week?



# Loving Our Human Church

By Fr. Thomas Richstatter, OFM

Unless you have been living under a rock, you probably know all too well that the Catholic Church is a human church—human sins, scandals, and disappointments. It makes one wonder if God couldn't have made the Church a little less human, a little more divine. But that is not how God does things.

And as God entrusted his creation to our first parents, so Christ entrusted his Church to us, his disciples. This is the positive, amazing side of belonging to this human Church. Christ commissioned us to cause the Church to "fill the earth." We are to make the Church catholic, universal, all-embracing—both in space (reaching to every land and culture) and in time (gracing every historical age).

What an awesome responsibility to be co-creators in God's great plan! What trust God has in us!

## Rich Traditions

Many cultures and historical periods have shaped the Catholic Church. There are parts of the Church that have taken root in the cultures of Byzantium and Syria. Probably most of you reading this article belong to the branch of the Church that has been highly influenced

by Roman and European culture. Each Sunday we see the priest at the altar wearing Roman clothing. (Albs and chasubles were once daily clothing for a first-century Roman.) We govern our Church with a Code of Canon Law based on the Roman legal system.

From the Europe of the Middle Ages we picked up the custom of serfs bowing and kneeling before the liege lord. From court etiquette we adopted titles such as "Your Eminence," "Your Excellency," and "Monsignor." And as the Church progresses through the centuries we try to select and incorporate what is good from the culture and let go of those elements that are no longer useful.

There's the problem! Our human vision is limited: We are not always sure which elements are good and which are no longer useful. Is the requirement of celibacy for priests still helpful to the Church? Should bishops be appointed or elected?

## When, When Not, to Change

During the past fifty years we have experienced many changes in the Mass. We know that some parts of the Mass were instituted by God and can't be changed, while other parts of the Mass

are of human origin. These human elements can be changed and indeed should be changed when they no longer help us express the meaning of the Eucharist. But what elements ought to be changed? How are they to be changed?

These important decisions God has entrusted to us. Sometimes we make wrong decisions as circumstances change or as we see situations more clearly. But isn't that all part of being human?

Catholics believe that being human is a good thing. Our bodies are good. Creation is good. Growth and change are good. That's why it's great to belong to a human Church—a Church that is forever growing, developing, and maturing—a Church that is always discovering new ways to proclaim the gospel until that day when the fullness of God's plan will be revealed in us. +



Lord, your Spirit renews our faith, hope, and love. Empower me to be your presence of love and compassion to others.

From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter Through Pentecost*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage  
and Mary Ann McSweeney

***It's an awesome responsibility to be co-creators in God's plan.***

## WEEKDAY READINGS

May 21–26, 2018

Monday, Weekday:  
Jas 3:13–18 / Mk 9:14–29

Tuesday, Weekday:  
Jas 4:1–10 / Mk 9:30–37

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:  
Jas 4:13–17 / Mk 9:38–40

Thursday, Weekday:  
Jas 5:1–6 / Mk 9:41–50

Friday, Weekday:  
Jas 5:9–12 / Mk 10:1–12

Saturday, St. Philip Neri:  
Jas 5:13–20 / Mk 10:13–16