

Homily for the Feast of Pentecost

We begin in a city crowded with visitors. Every land, every language is represented and because of their differences, they cannot communicate with each other.

But really we begin in another place. It is called the plains of Shinar. And on these plains the peoples of the world built themselves a tower -- a tower so tall that it would reach to the heavens and they would become equal to God. But God saw through their pride and their arrogance. God sent into their midst a confusion of tongues. Suddenly they could not understand each other. Suddenly they were divided because they were not able to be heard or understood by others. Now they could no longer speak the same language. And the tower was called Babel.

But back to the city of the first reading. For Jerusalem on this day was a reflection of the Tower of Babel. For Jerusalem was divided by many languages and customs, by differences of belief and of politics.

What is so striking about this picture of Babel revisited in Jerusalem is that when Peter, filled with God's Spirit, comes out to speak to them – they understood him. The Spirit of God cutting through the divisions of many nations and cultures creates the atmosphere for

understanding and communication. The gift of the Spirit is unity that overcomes diversity. And the key to the gift is that the Spirit of God did not make these people less than who they were. Rather they became more than they had been. For they became one with each other.

Could our world, our neighborhoods, our bodies of government, even our Church, be any more divided than they are now? Economics, taxes, wages, work, black, white, Asian, straight, gay...the list of categories seems endless. Is there not an abundance of hurt feelings, prejudicial behavior, division and, sadly, hatred? Do we hear the voice of God speaking to us in the gift of Jesus Christ?

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit overcame human differences. For a moment in time the Spirit united peoples with the gift of understanding. They heard the Good News as they were and where they were. And they were never the same again.

Do we not need that gift of the Spirit again? In reminding us of the power of the Spirit of God on that first Pentecost, should we not be moved to put aside our violence, our hatred, our distrust and our prejudice and cry out:

Come Holy Spirit!

Fill our hearts.

*Give to us, this day and in this time,
the gift of understanding.*

Let our hatred and prejudice end.

Let forgiveness flow from our lives.

Give to us the gift of peace.

And makes us one with each other.