

Homily for the Feast of Pentecost

It happened about eighteen years ago. It was Ascension Thursday and Bishop Mulvee was here to celebrate Confirmation. We were gathered in the plaza, lining everyone up and getting ready to begin when we got word that one of the candidates would not be present. He had been struggling with drugs and relapsed. Wisely, his parents put him back into a healing situation.

Bishop Mulvee pulled me aside and said: “Ron, this is very important. When this candidate comes back, call me and I will have him come to the Cathedral and I will confirm him privately in my chapel.”

Five or six weeks later I did call the Bishop. We set up a time for this Confirmation to take place. I remember well. It was a Sunday afternoon. The Bishop, his Master of Ceremonies, the candidate, his parents, his sponsor, the parish Youth Minister and I were there. The Bishop’s chapel is located in the Cathedral rectory. It is small but quite beautiful.

Bishop Mulvee was absolutely stunning. He greeted everyone and made them feel at home. The ceremony was simple and obviously very personal. What struck me the most was the Bishop’s words to the candidate. After I read the story of the first Pentecost the Bishop spoke

about how often in life we try to escape by locking out the world. Taking drugs was a way to go to the upper room so that we don't have to face the world. It was running away from the world. But God calls us to leave that upper room...to not be afraid of the world. God wants us to know that in Jesus Christ we don't have to hide or run away or be afraid. Because in Jesus Christ we find the power of God waiting to guide us and to empower us to face the demons in life and to be free.

Of all the Confirmation ceremonies I have attended, this one single ceremony taught me more about Pentecost than all the other ceremonies combined. And I share it with you so that perhaps we might all learn from the profound wisdom that Bishop Mulvey imparted to this young man from our parish.

How often would we all like to run away? How often would we like to go to the upper room, to slam the door and shut out the world? In the end, that doesn't achieve anything. In fact, it makes things worse.

The gift of God's Spirit is an invitation to be free...to learn that God is our higher power. In the gift of God's Holy Spirit we are given the wisdom and the strength not to run away from the world but to embrace the world and to teach others that we have nothing to fear. God's Holy Spirit frees us from the terrors of life and empowers us to proclaim in our

hearts and in our lives that “Jesus Christ is Lord...yesterday, today and forever.”