



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

Renew Faith • Build Communion • Inspire Hope

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

May 24, 2015
Solemnity of Pentecost

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

"Lord, send out Your Spirit and renew the face of the earth."

On this solemn and joyful Feast of Pentecost, the Church concludes the 50-day Easter Season. Over these 50 days, we have celebrated Jesus' Resurrection, His many appearances to the Apostles to encourage and renew their faith, Jesus' Ascension marking the moment when Jesus gave the Church "the great commission" to "go out into the entire world, baptizing and proclaiming the Good News to the ends of the earth," and today, the Feast of Pentecost, when Christ's Paschal Mystery has been completed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit Who has given birth to the Church and to her mission. For more than 2,000 years, the Holy Spirit has guided the Church, and has sustained and directed the Church's missionary efforts to every part of the known world.

We oftentimes refer to Pentecost as the Birthday of the Church. Rather than focusing on how old the Church is, as we normally do when we celebrate our own birthdays, we should celebrate the fact that Pentecost helps us to realize that the Church is "ever young" and the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is always fresh and new. As we pray in today's psalm refrain, "*Lord, send out Your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.*" The Holy Spirit is constantly "renewing" the earth with the Gospel of the Risen Lord. At the same time, the Holy Spirit reminds us that we are always a Church with a mission.

As Pope Francis said so beautifully in his Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium" (The Joy of the Gospel): "At Pentecost, the Spirit made the apostles go forth from themselves and turned them into heralds of God's wondrous deeds, capable of speaking to each person in his or her own language. The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the gospel with boldness in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition."

On Pentecost, we are reminded that what we refer to as the "new evangelization" is really being faithful to the Church's age-old and timeless mission—to proclaim the Good News and teach the faith with renewed conviction and find new and creative ways to communicate within the current culture which tends to be less interested in God and the ways of faith.

This year, Pentecost and Memorial Day weekend coincide in a happy coincidence which reminds us that just as we rejoice and give thanks for those of our fellow citizens who have laid down their lives to protect our democratic principles and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of our great country, so too do we thank God for those "martyrs of the faith," both in generations before us as well as those current martyrs of our own day and time, who are being persecuted and killed as witnesses to the faith. May we be inspired by those martyrs so that we can stand strong in our faith and firm in our love for our Risen Lord and His Church.

On this very important weekend, let us pray that the Holy Spirit of the Risen Lord will fill our hearts to safeguard and respect the gift of human life, to protect and uphold the sanctity of marriage and to defend and promote the joy of the Gospel as we stand up for our faith in all that we say and do. May the Holy Spirit keep the Church ever young and bold as she stays faithful to her mission, and may each of us, baptized into Christ, be willing and faithful missionaries carrying the Good News to all we meet, "*renewing the face of the earth.*"

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo