

## **Vigil of PENTECOST**

**June 3, 2017 St. Augustine Cathedral**

### **(First Annual Diocesan Hispanic Charismatic Gathering)**

I am so happy to be here with all of you for this very special Mass on the Vigil of Pentecost. I welcome my brother priests (Fathers Fabio, Daniel and Jose) and all of you to the Cathedral Church, as you have come from many different parishes around the Diocese. And I am very grateful to our Sisters Missionaries of the Divine Spirit for coordinating this gathering.

Pentecost is all about joy! It is about life in the Holy Spirit! It is about being “on fire” with the Love of the Risen Jesus!

Pentecost is a solemn Feast for all Christians, and especially for us as Catholics, as we give thanks for the Holy Spirit Who guides the Church, and who dwells within our hearts and souls---as we oftentimes say, making our bodies “temples of the Holy Spirit” every day.

As your bishop, a Successor of the Apostles, I want to share with you the joy of the Holy Spirit and the Good News of the Risen Lord. That is the very essence of our faith.

We are all very familiar with what happened when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles in the Upper Room on the original Pentecost. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that there was a “strong, driving wind”-----like a thunderstorm, or perhaps more like a tornado---“and it filled the whole house. And the Holy Spirit came in “tongues as of fire which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit.” And that Holy Spirit transformed the Apostles and Disciples from confused and fearful men and women into courageous, passionate and vibrant witnesses to the Risen Jesus. They were filled with joy!

That’s what I want to bring all of you to find in this powerful Feast---the reason why we, as Jesus’ Disciples, should be filled with joy, with hope, and to be on fire with love for Jesus!

Today there are many people who are looking for that “something” that is missing in their lives. They may not realize it, but what they are looking for is God. God is Who we need, and we’ll never be truly satisfied until we find God---or should I say, until we allow God to find us. The great Saint Augustine said that about God: “Our hearts are restless, dear God, and they will only find rest when they rest in You.”

As we look all around us----in our cities, in our country, in the world----we see a lot of sadness, and for many different reasons. What they really need is for someone to bring them the Joy of the Gospel---the Good News of Jesus Christ.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, our baptismal vocation is to be a missionary of joy in the world---or at least in the part of the world where we live.

So today is a good day to check on ourselves---to ask ourselves: “How enthusiastic am I about my faith?” “How joy-full am I about the fact that Jesus Christ is Alive?” How hope-full am I knowing that I am “a temple”----a “dwelling place” for the Holy Spirit of God?”

Sometimes we lose some of the fervor of our faith; perhaps we let our daily problems discourage us; maybe we allow the routines of our lives or the distractions of the world around us, think about our Faith, and maybe even at times, coming to Church, as something that is boring. We might be “spiritually anemic”.

Tonight, let this Feast of Pentecost rekindle your faith; let the Holy Spirit set you “on fire” with His Love; may this Good News of Jesus shake you out of any boredom, like an earthquake, and send us back into our daily lives filled with joy and hope.

That is what this evening’s First Reading was saying to us. We heard about the Prophet Ezekiel and how the Lord showed him the image of the dry, life-less bones. But God let His Holy Spirit, in the form of “life-giving Breath” fill those dry, dead bones, and they were brought back to life. And that was how Ezekiel knew, and how we know, what we heard God say in that Reading: “I will put My Spirit in you that you may live....thus you shall know that I am the Lord.”

That is our faith in the Risen Jesus; it’s about life, Joy, Hope, and spiritual strength.

So, how can we renew the certainty within us that God loves us and wants us to be happy? That is what we are doing here, in the beautiful times of prayer and reflection and praise that we have already shared together earlier this evening, and through this Holy Mass we are celebrating together now: gathered together here in worship, around the Altar of the Lord, being sisters and brothers in Christ with one another. Right here, among us, Jesus Himself is Present with us, in His Life-giving Word and very soon in His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist to be our spiritual Food and Drink.

Yes, Pentecost is pure joy. And Pentecost gives us hope.

That's what we heard St. Paul talking about in our 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading in his Letter to the Romans. It was in "hope that we were saved". We don't Hope for what we SEE; we HOPE for what we're not able to see, but that we trust God will provide for us because He loves us. We live our whole lives, "waiting in joyful hope" for the day of our own Salvation when we pass from this life into Eternal Life.

We need to remember that after the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles, they didn't just continue to stay in that Upper Room and be all pleased with themselves that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. NO, the Holy Spirit compelled them----almost forced----them to go forth and be Joyful Witnesses.

The Good News of the Risen Jesus began to be spread all over the world----that was the Birthday of the Church. And they were so convinced of this Good News, that nothing could stop them----they even gave their lives for the sake of the Gospel.

So, once again, what about us? All of us have received the Holy Spirit on the day of our Confirmation. And that same Holy Spirit compels us and urges us to go into our world and proclaim the Good News that we are happy; we are Joyful; we are proud of our Christian Catholic faith.

Yes! To be Christians, Catholics, is to live always in Joyful Hope.

May God bless you abundantly with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and may He enkindle the Fire of God's Love within you, and help you, along with all the members of the Church throughout the world, to "renew the face of the earth". Amen.