

Homily. Solemnity of Pentecost. Year.C. 8/9 June 2019.

About 20 years ago I was studying across the Bay from San Francisco, at Berkley in California. It happened that we had most of our weekends free so I decided I'd go out to various Parishes across the City so I could taste and see their liturgies and communities.

On Pentecost Sunday I ended up in a Parish whose name I've long forgotten. Everything was going well until we came to the Liturgy of the Word. As the reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the same reading we've just listened to, reached its high point a whizzing noise became audible from the choir loft behind the congregation. It turned out to be the sound of a massive white dove bigger than a grown man swooping down on wires across our heads. Apparently, some bright spark had decided to try to have a very realistic re-enactment of the 1st Pentecost. Actually, it was way too realistic as they'd miscalculated the weight of the dove and the pull of gravity on the wires. The enormous dove-like figure ended up clipping the heads of anyone who wasn't quick enough to avoid its swooping drop. It turned out to be very Un-Holy and Un-Pentecost experience as yells of fear and yelps of pain ensued derailing the entire Mass for some time.

Now, of course we understand that the images used in the readings tonight/today, a powerful wind, flames of fire, a dove descending and speaking in tongues, are trying to tell us about the experience of the power, energy and life of God entering inside of us, making us into a new home and Temple for the Lord. What we learn from this is that God is

both strong and gentle at the same time and that this strength in gentleness wants to dwell in us. We call this the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit of Holiness, that's no less real than is our own love, strength and gentleness.

In fact, if we'll let God make a home in us then we will be all the better for it. We'll be filled to the brim with God's giving and serving love and become all the gentler and wiser with God's caring gentleness and helpful wisdom. This is the way that we'll be better able to make Jesus present to others, speaking to them in the universal language of love about the Good-News of our sister and brotherhood in God's family.

Pentecost ends the Easter Season because it literally brings the promise of the Resurrection home to each and every one of us. The resurrection of Jesus isn't just history anymore, an event from long ago and far away. With the coming into us of the Holy Spirit from now onwards Jesus is risen and living in you and me. He speaks and listens, walks and moves, touches and takes action through us. We, the Church today, are His Body, His Apostles, His home and His presence alive and busy in the world.

So, here's a little advance warning; I want all of you to listen carefully for a whizzing sound because the Dove of God's love is about to descend afresh upon us. This time, though, no need to duck your heads. Instead, be like Mary and the Apostles, standing up tall and ready to welcome the Holy Spirit of God's strong and gentle love into the home of your hearts.