

The Holy Spirit: New Life, New Power.

John 20:19-23 Acts 2:1-11

Pentecost Sunday (6.08.14) readings contain two interesting dynamics concerning the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

In the John passage Jesus appears to the disciples after his resurrection. He greeted them with peace and he breathed upon them saying, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*" This correlates with the creation narrative in the garden (Genesis 2:7), *the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being;.....* now in receiving the breath of the resurrected Jesus man is born as a "new creation" into an eternal and incorruptible life passing from death to new life.

Romans 10:9 says, *if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* Up to this point the disciples believed that Jesus is Lord but now they could believe wholeheartedly that Jesus was raised from the dead, and salvation comes through Jesus and meeting the resurrected Jesus is a life-changing encounter. And yet one can note that this didn't seem to have any substantial impact on the community at large and the disciples lacked boldness and direction and went on their usual way of doing things even going fishing (John 21:3).

New life will be followed by new power.

Given new life they were still not empowered to be the effective witnesses that Jesus called them to be. John the Baptist told his listeners: *I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.*(Luke 3:16). On three different occasions Jesus reminded the disciples of this: *While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the holy Spirit."* (Acts 1:4-5); *but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high* (Luke 24:49b); *but you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses.* (Acts 1:8)



In Acts 2:1-11 the full impact of baptism in the Holy Spirit comes into play as a mighty wind and tongues of fire come to rest upon those present. While water baptism is immersion in water, baptism in the Holy Spirit is the total immersion from above with such a great inflow that it results in an unstoppable outflow of spiritual boldness; immediate knowledge as exemplified by Peter's speech (Acts 2:14-41) and the speaking in unknown languages, words guided by the Holy Spirit but spoken by the tongues of those present.



In contrast with the first passage this is not a quiet event as boldness and supernatural power come into play and the outflow is immediately evident to the community as it responds in amazement and perplexity as to what is happening. When the Holy Spirit acts one can expect the unexpected.

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