

Pentecost Sunday, Year "A"

"Receive the Holy Spirit"

I like to share an interesting story by Sherry Antoneti on this Pentecost Sunday. According to her, "being lonely and stuck at home and not coping with it very well that first year as a mom, I pushed his stroller all around the hot streets of Houston, desperate for company.

I made friends with the dry cleaner, the photo lady, the pharmacist at the more expensive place because this woman at least knew my name, and the receptionist at my apartment complex. The receptionist! Every day around lunch, she'd see me pushing the beautiful blue perambulator, a gift from my in-laws, about the grounds. She'd wave me in and coo at my son, he'd smile back at her with his whole body.

One day, I walked by and she didn't wave me in. She was crying. I went in to see what was wrong. She explained she'd just broken up with her boyfriend and then discovered she was pregnant. Friends had offered her a ride to the abortion clinic but then she thought of seeing my little baby every day, and just couldn't do it. She looked at my son and the tears came again.

I wasn't an expert on any of this, I was a first time mom who was fighting tooth and nail the boredom of being home alone, not comfortable with my own self and my new role that seemed so limited and stifling, so not exciting in the world. But I put my arm around her and asked questions that, to this day, I know were Holy Spirit directed. They weren't what I would have thought to ask.

"Does your boyfriend know?"

He didn't.

I told her he needed to know because this is his child too. Even if you have broken up, he should know, he has a child, he's the father. She nodded, "Okay."

"Do you have family who can help you, like your parents? This is their grandbaby."

She nodded again, "I'll tell them first."

I said, "No, tell your boyfriend first, he has a right to know."

She admitted she worried he would counsel an abortion. I said something like "You know him right?" she nodded. "He's good right?" She nodded again.

"Then tell him." I hoped to heaven I'd counseled correctly.

Long story short, we talked, I hugged her, fished a bit of chocolate I had with me out of my purse (the very thing that undermined my walks) and I went home and prayed, really prayed for my friend. The next few days I didn't see her, though I took my walk daily and I became worried.

However, the following Monday she waved me in from my normal routine. "You've got to come in!" she beamed, "I told him. I told him and we are trying to work it out, to get back together."

We hugged. She told me she'd moved in with her parents, they were supportive and that they were going to her first OB/GYN appointment next week. Hugs and kisses, joy all around. Shortly thereafter we moved from Texas and I lost track of my friend until we came back for a visit and stopped in to see our old home in Houston.

She ran out to greet me and hugged me. She and the father had married and they now had two children, a boy and a girl. Her hug said so much in the few seconds we had together, of a life transformed by the loneliness of one new mother and a little boy only 4 months old in his pram, who smiled with his whole body every time anyone picked him up. It was a transformation of not just one but many lives — by the Holy Spirit" (story written by Sherry Antonetti 2013).

Today is Pentecost Sunday. Today is a day of divine empowerment. This is the day the church was born. Believing that Jesus is always faithful to His promise, the disciples of Jesus gather in prayer. And while at prayer, the Holy Spirit from heaven descended on them, people who spoke different languages were able to speak one language, which is the language of love.

There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic experience has had a lot of impact in the lives of all – believers and unbelievers alike. Such was like the impact the death of Jesus on the cross had in the lives of the apostles, challenging them to question their faith and to look for the way forward.

Jesus the Christ, understanding their struggles, sends them the Holy Spirit of God to empower and enlighten them on the way forward. Today, Jesus is doing it again. As we gradually wind down from the Covid-19 pandemic experience, the Holy Spirit is given to us again to lead and direct us to a purposeful and meaningful life.

Yes, we received the Holy Spirit on the day of our baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit was imparted in us on the day of our confirmation. Yearly, the church offers us the opportunity of renewing our spiritual anointing. This is to enable us fine tune our lives in the midst of the noises that seem to distract us in the world today.

Make no mistake about it, the Spirit of God is still at work in the world and in our lives today. Responding to the unction of the Holy Spirit through prayer and good works remains the best way to go. Our world may be confused due to the pandemic; yet, believers who are led by the Holy Spirit are still capable of figuring out the things to do that would preserve us on the path of holiness, truth, righteousness and love.

The temptation is to take the easy way out. Sit back and blame others for all the evil in the world. But, we also have a choice to think positively and use our gifts to figure out the ways we could contribute to the civilization of love in a troubled world. With the help of the Holy Spirit, there is no limit to the good we can do in the world today.

The Spirit, which God has given us, is not a spirit of timidity, but of fortitude, of benevolence, and of moderation. Impossibility is nothing for all who are led by the Spirit. Though trials abound yet do we know that with God on our side, we shall overcome. All who nurse this hope are encouraged today to move on and to keep doing good things in the world.