

**Homily for June 4, 2006
Solemnity of Pentecost**

By Father Charles Bowes

**Acts 2:1-11
Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34
Galatians 5:16-25
John 20:19-23**

The Spirit of God enables us to see.

Just before I step up here to proclaim the Gospel, and then just before I begin the homily, I say a little prayer: “Lord, may some word of mine, be thine.”

And then, depending on how much or how little I'm distracted by arthritis, while reading the Gospel or while giving the homily I've prepared, occasionally a word or phrase jumps out at me with a meaning or nuance I hadn't see before – a kind of unexpected enrichment, an unforeseen surprise or insight.

Some years ago, on the Solemnity of Pentecost, this happened to me in a startling way. I had been wrestling with the question, “Where is the Spirit to be found? And how do we recognize the Spirit?” I was reflecting on the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit as proclaimed by Saint Paul. I knew that I didn't possess all these gifts and fruits, maybe some, but definitely not all. And yet, I had received the Holy Spirit, at least three times: in Baptism, at Confirmation, and again at Ordination. So where were the gifts? I was not alone; I knew many people who were good Christian men and women, but they also didn't possess all the gifts that the Spirit promised.

Looking up after the reading of the Gospel, I had a sense that somehow I saw the significance of each person in that congregation – and each was wonderful, beyond beautiful or handsome, but of infinite worth – just an overwhelming sense of that value. I looked, and there in front of me was gathered the People of God.

Not just some wonderful expression coming from the Second Vatican Council, but the people I knew, the people I ministered to, the people who ministered to me, parishioners, my community. In them, in a marvelous diversity, and a wondrous communion, each of them was a reflection of the Holy Spirit who dwelled within them. They gave the Spirit form and made him real, intimate. In them the Spirit was made manifest, “made flesh.” Here was the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit looked wonderful. In that moment I realized that the Holy Spirit was just as real, just as present and just as familiar as the Father and the Son. I also realized that every gift the Spirit had to give was present.

I realized that I didn't have all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that didn't matter at all...because we, together, the People of God, the community gathered around the Altar, inspired by the Word, immersed in new life, did have all the gifts that the Holy Spirit had to give. In that moment of looking up and looking out, I realized that the Holy Spirit was always present. In fact, the Spirit was truly keeping everything together and moving everything along. But now I could see, touch, embrace and love the Spirit in a new way. And I realized that the Spirit had always been reaching out to comfort, touch, embrace and love even me. Jesus had said, “they have eyes but they do not see.” Recognizing the Holy Spirit was a matter of knowing how to see.

The Spirit of God enables us to see.