



PENTECOST

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault
(Fontgombault, June 8th, 2025)

Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum, alleluia.
The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole earth, alleluia.
(Introit of the Mass)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
My dearly beloved Sons,

HUMAN ACTION is clothed with greatness in a man or woman in whom dwells the grace of God and the gifts that come with this grace. Therefore, we shouldn't be misled by the title of the book from which the first reading was taken. If it is indeed the book of the Acts of the Apostles, what is told in it is truly the action of God through the apostles, according to the promise Jesus had made to His disciples just before the Ascension, as mentioned by the evangelist St. Mark in the last chapter of his gospel:

The Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it.^a

a. Mk 16:19-20.

The disciples are gathered in a same place. "A sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."^b

b. Acts 2:1.

Then, "there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them."^c

c. Acts 2:2.

The strength which fills the hearts of the disciples has been called by the Church the gift of the Holy Spirit. Tradition, in the light of Scripture, has highlighted in this gift seven gifts. We shouldn't reify these seven gifts, make of each of them an independent entity, which God would give to such and such, or wouldn't give at all. In the Bible, the figure 'seven' refers to a fulfilment. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the gifts of the Holy Spirit "make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations."^d Thus, the whole human activity should be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, open to God's inspirations. Each of the seven gifts heightens this or that aspect of human activity, each according to its own character.

d. CCC, n. 1831.

If the gift of the Spirit remains first and foremost a gift of God, which God consequently is free to make more or less manifest in the activity of such or such, according to the needs of the Church or of life, nonetheless our freedom, too, takes part in the implementation of the divine gift. For that matter, the book of the Acts has distinguished two moments in the coming of the Spirit. First, He fills the house. Then, He rests on each one of the disciples.

A few centuries before, Isaiah had prophesied, concerning the Lord Jesus, that the Spirit would rest on the scion from the stem of Jesse:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING, the spirit of COUNSEL and FORTITUDE, the spirit of KNOWLEDGE and the FEAR of the Lord [*which the Septuagint translated by PIETY*]. And his delight shall be in the FEAR of the Lord.^e

e. Is 11:1-3.

But from now on, the Spirit must keep spreading, and the words of the Lord are carried out before our eyes: "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"^f Or also these words, uttered in the Temple at the end of the feast of Tabernacles:

f. Lk 12:49.

If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink, he who believes in me. As the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water."^g

g. Jn 7:37-38.

And John the Evangelist adds:

Now this He said about the Spirit, which those who believed in Him were to receive. For as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.^h

h. Ibid., v. 39.

Jesus is now glorified, and the Spirit has been poured out. We readily repeat during these days the invocation, "*Veni Sancte Spiritus*, Come, O Holy Spirit!" It is a good thing. Yet, we should go further, and consider the acts of our lives in the light of the seven gifts. Let us take them up one by one. Let us ask ourselves whether we truly implore the coming of the Holy Spirit upon such or such side of our activity. Should it truly be the case, our activity will be transfigured, made alive and raised above itself by the strength and fire of the gifts.

Through the gift of wisdom, man tastes the presence of God, contemplates things eternal and takes pleasure in them, burning with the desire to communicate the taste of this presence to his neighbour. Do we take time for contemplation?

Through the gift of understanding, man, as far as is possible for him, enters into the mystery of God and understands from the inside, as it were, faith and Scripture, which it is impossible to know through the natural lights of the mind. Do we undertake to grasp the connection between the mysteries of the faith and the plan of salvation?

Through the gift of knowledge, man acknowledges God at work in the nature and in history. Do we make use of the creation as a means to go towards God?

Through the gift of fortitude, man acquires perseverance to observe the law of God and of the Church during trials. Do we have enough courage to be witnesses to our faith in our humble everyday life, but also, should God require that of us, through the gift of our life?

Through the gift of counsel, man hones his discernment concerning what it is fitting to do or eschew, to say or keep

secret. Do we know how to speak or keep silent when necessary?

Through the gift of piety, man experiences God's fatherhood, His propinquity and tender love. Do we cultivate spiritual childhood towards God, the love for God and His saints?

Through the gift of fear of God, man understands the full extent of God's greatness, he becomes aware of the infinite distance between the loving Creator and His creation. Is our relationship with God marked with humility and respect, and with the fear to offend Him?

The Spirit is fruitful. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, are His fruits.ⁱ The absence of those fruits in the world today is worrisome, as the culture of death makes itself ever more oppressive. What better bulwark could we oppose against it than the Spirit that gives life?

i. Cf. *Gal* 5:22-23.

As deputies and senators are preparing to vote on the bill of law on euthanasia, may the Spirit enlighten their consciences, so that they should cast their vote led by their consciences, conscious that they will be required to account for their votes, their words, silences or absences, and for each of the consequences of those.

Last, don't let us yield to despair. Let us ponder on the life of Mary, she who remains the Temple of the Holy Spirit. May the fire with which she burned, burn in our hearts.

Veni Sancte Spiritus! Amen, Alleluia.

