

Whitsunday

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[0 : 01] We celebrate the Feast of Pentecost today, or what is called Whitsunday in its old English terminology. Whitsunday merely reflects the white wore by those being baptized on the Feast of Pentecost, which connected these new converts to that great Feast of Easter.

This morning I want to highlight the connection of what baptism does, the giving of new life and purpose, to this great Feast of Pentecost.

You see, Pentecost is about God creating order out of disorder, just as baptism is about bringing life from death.

God created the earth from the darkness and the void, we read in Genesis chapter 1, from chaos. The Spirit of God hovered over those primordial waters until the Word of God spoke and brought chaos into the glorious creation of the world.

Chaos and darkness were banished by God. But, it can slowly creep back into our lives when we, creatures of God, choose to rebel against our Creator.

[1 : 30] Chaos, shame, and death entered into the created order through the rebellion of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Chaos was the result of the great world rebellion that led to God wiping the earth clean, saving eight people, Noah and his family.

Chaos was the result of the great people, Noah and his family.

Chaos is what happened as the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah led to its destruction. And such chaos continues to rear its ugly head as creatures still defy their God, and they seek to call good evil and evil good.

One of the most explicit examples of such chaos is found in the story of the Tower of Babel. Descendants from that wicked man, Lamech, or Lamech, decided to show off their strength and their ability and what they could do without God.

And they began erecting a tower to the heavens.

[3 : 42] They began erecting a tower to the heavens.

Like the variety of different tongues we read about at the Tower of Babel. And chaos brings destruction, which is what ultimately happened to that great tower.

But Pentecost is the undoing of such confusion and chaos. We heard in our epistle reading this morning of Acts chapter 2 that the Holy Spirit came upon people as they heard Peter's sermon about Jesus.

And by the Holy Spirit's word of God was now heard by the Holy Spirit.

Clarity was given by the Spirit as each heard in their own language the word of truth.

[5 : 09] And receiving the Holy Spirit. And receiving the Holy Spirit, Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs, all now heard the word of God and they rejoiced.

The Holy Spirit brought clarity from chaos. And he formed a community that would be the bedrock of the universal and Catholic faith.

As baptized Christians, you and I belong to this universal and Catholic church. But the chaos creeps at our door, seeking to master us like it did Cain.

And we can either give in to the spirit of the age, be swept away by the desire for power, prestige, the pride of life that will make us slaves to its seductive allure, which ends only in chaos and destruction.

Or we can submit ourselves to God, being led by the spirit, being mastered by the word of God. And therefore have order and meaning in the midst of a world that continues to go in the ways of Cain, Lamech and their ultimate master, Satan.

[6 : 43] We live in a time where people are confused and even churches have capitulated to the way of all flesh, seeking to make people happy rather than calling them to a life of holiness.

Entertainment is now often called worship with fog machines and all kinds of nonsense. And the goal for many churches is to see how big and how edgy a congregation can be in order to attract the masses, the crowds.

Marriage and children are often seen as a drain on society or a challenge to one's own autonomy and freedom. Our national debt is a failure to live within our means.

War and the so-called mission of making the world safe for democracy is often a power grab for more expansive power, usually for the sake of wealth and control.

The world is a dark place and no triumphal propaganda or theology can ever erase this reality. Therefore, there is only one answer.

[8 : 03] And it does not come from a symbol of a donkey or an elephant. It comes from the order, the order that God brings to each person who desires him rather than the mass confusion and chaos.

It comes from the life and light of Jesus Christ and his cross, which the Holy Spirit brings to us, applies to us through the sacraments of the church, which then connects us to Christ, who recreates us to be new creatures, who long for common prayer, a common mission, speaking with a common voice, the word of truth, order in the midst of chaos.

We are called to behold the beauty of God in the midst of the destruction and the false enticements of this world that ends only in disappointment and ultimately despair and death.

And this is what Easter brought forth. Life from death. Purpose from living pointless lives. And Pentecost is the ever-living reality of our baptism where we receive the Holy Spirit in order that we might now walk in this joy in this new life, even in the midst of the darkness all around us.

And we have the promise that in the end, confusion will be no more. And the chaos will give way to the eternal companionship we have with our God and with all those who have gone before us, who chose the cross of Jesus Christ over the wavering tower that is collapsing before us.

[9 : 56] Let us walk then by the word of God, being led by the Holy Spirit, who connects us to Christ through the sacraments, so that we might then be channels of God's grace and his mercy, seeking to bring order to a culture that is absolutely shackled by confusion and chaos.

Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.