

**Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis**  
**Solemnity of Pentecost, May 30/31, 2020, Cycle A**

In his book "Toward the Future," the priest-paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote: "The day will come when after harnessing the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of Love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, humankind will have discovered fire." Teilhard likened our ability to harness the forces of love to that of controlling fire for good purposes, taps into one of the metaphors used by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles – "tongues of fire."

In the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles for the Day of Pentecost, Luke writes: "And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, which filled the house in which they were. Then, there appeared to them tongues of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them." As Teilhard de Chardin alluded when humankind discovered fire, that discovery of fire set humankind on a whole new trajectory; humankind was changed forever for the better. When the power of the Spirit came upon the disciples in that upper room 2000 years ago, and set their hearts on fire, again, the world was changed and has never been the same. When those tongues of fire came upon the Apostles and disciples, the Acts of the Apostles says: "And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues ..." The gift of God's Spirit began to change the course of history and directed our human diversity work toward human unity.

Throughout human history our diversity, our differences, our various cultures, ethnicities and languages have been sources of division, conflict and alienation. Instead of seeing our differences as a gift that can bless and enrich us as we interact with each other, we have used our differences down through history to dehumanize each other, saying you or your people are not as good as me or us.

Maybe the nightmare of COVID-19, a global pandemic, might help us to see things anew, help us to realize our need for each other, that we really are all one.

There is no denying that COVID-19 has revealed the gaping holes in the fabric of human life in regards to race, creed, economic background, and gender and class. Hopefully, the pandemic will also help us slowly to realize that if we strive to live out of a spirit of compassion, generosity, ingenuity, hospitality and creativity, we will help heal the wounds of division, and bind humanity together more as one. Using our diversity not to work against each other, but to work in unity for the common goal of defeating the novel coronavirus.

Pentecost reveals, though, that on our own we cannot achieve real unity. Unity, a bond of oneness, is only brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit being poured into us – the Spirit of God's Love.

Without the flame of God's Love burning in our hearts, the flame of God's Spirit – we will build walls behind which we hide, or from behind which we try to destroy those without.

With the Gift of the Spirit, at Pentecost, the curse of our division and alienation from each other is reversed – diversity in the Spirit becomes a source of blessing that underpins unity – not division. The Acts of the Apostles tells us that because the Apostles were proclaiming the Gospel in different languages – all were able to understand the Good News – all were from different corners of the Roman Empire, but all were able to hear the Good News of Jesus' Resurrection. The Spirit used their diversity to form this diverse lot into one people. *E Pluribus Unum* – out of many one! An amazing aspect of the unity of the Spirit brings about is that diversity is not obliterated, but diversity becomes the sources of unity. All who gathered that long ago day on the first Pentecost heard the good news as they were, where they were – they were still ethnically and linguistically diverse, but they were also now God's one people.

The Spirit can lead us to see and understand one another as unique and beloved living temples where God's Spirit chooses to live and breathe and inspire and empower.