

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

The Pentecost Event — Then and Now

Part III

The Acts of the Apostles contains the written record of the first Pentecost — the primary epiphany of the Holy Spirit. The transformation that was accompanied by the sound of a roaring wind and by fire, renewed the face of the earth and the dry bones of huddled disciples became the limbs of men suddenly alive and anxious to move in haste and separately to the ends of the earth.



Ages before His Son, Jesus, had assured frightened and disconsolate disciples of the expediency of His departure from their midst to make way for the coming of His Spirit, God the Father had announced the wondrous work of the Spirit through His prophet Ezekiel. The 37th Chapter of this book portrays why Pentecost would be a matter of great human urgency. The prophet is transported to an immense valley eerily still and strewn from end to end with human bones bleached white with death. God explains to His prophet that this is the condition in which He finds His chosen people. "If they only knew their plight, they would cry out: 'Our bones are dried up, our hope has gone; we are as good as dead.'" (Ez. 37) Then He described what His Spirit would accomplish with and for them: "The Lord Yahweh says to these bones: 'I am now going to make the breath enter you, and you will live. The valley of the dry bones will be transformed into another Eden filled with living things and men fully alive. This will happen when I shall put my spirit in you.'" (Ez. 14)

The great fulfillment of God's prophecy and of His Son's promise were the dramatic events of the first Pentecost (cf. Acts 2). Upon reading the account, we might be tempted to say that it happened once but will

never occur again. The truth is that Pentecost is **now** and **forever** to men of faith who are willing to be open to the Spirit and to say 'Amen' to the Word of God. The manifestation of His coming to modern disciples may not be so clothed with the spectacular as was the first Pentecost, but wind and fire still remain valid symbols of the Spirit's entry into our lives today.

The wind teaches us much about the person of the Spirit. Christ Himself had spoken of similarities between the qualities of wind and the characteristics of the Spirit. "The wind blows wherever it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit." (John 3:8) Wind and spirit cannot be contained nor controlled by man. A world without wind would leave man immobile. Becalmed, we would never voyage to other lands, see new horizons and cultures. Such is the activity of the Spirit. Once the Apostles were stirred by the breath of God, they were spirited like the birds of the air all the way to the ends of the earth. Pentecost still is a reality to all who pray: "O breathe on us, O Breath of God. Make us alive and spirited with joy and enthusiasm."

The coming of the Spirit on the First Pentecost was also perceived as **fire**. God's previous appearances had usually been engulfed in fire. It was in fire that He gave His people the Law as their path to Him. In a pillar of fire He led them out of the wilderness. The coming of His Son was to be as a fire cast upon earth which, for some, would be Hell and for others the warmth of His love. His disciples are to be like lamps placed on lampstands where all can be illumined by the gift of the Spirit and whereby the powers of darkness can be dispelled. All human securities not rooted in God but in self are to be drawn toward the fire of the Spirit — tested — and either consumed or purified. And Pentecost is **now** to all who pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, replace the darkness within us with your gentle light

Replace the coldness within us with a loving warmth

Replace the winter weather with your Spring

Light the fires of Your love in our hearts

Consume the treasured loves of our egotism and unbelieving hearts.

The First Pentecost also witnessed the Spirit's power to end the babel of languages that had always symbolized man's disunity. It is the work of the Spirit to knit people together — to initiate perfect and effortless communication between men. Whenever we are present to each other superficially, we speak foreign languages to each other. At the First Pentecost people understood each other and were understood and the content of their speech was the same, "The Marvels of God."

How we need this unifying presence of the Spirit today! We have allowed too many to be strangers to us, to speak with alien tongues. Languages that are foreign to us are heard in every **divided** home, on every street, between races, classes, generations, and nations. The frequency of war in our day is but a surface indication of our incapacity to speak to and to be heard by each other. How we need His Spirit to unify us!

Yes, Pentecost can be today if we but will it. Every call to **renewal** — be it the Year of Renewal, The Time of Renewal, The Holy Year — has been based on this premise and hope. But since the Spirit ordinarily limits His Presence and Power to the depth, length, and breadth of our Amen, we must offer the hope and prayer that there will be this Pentecost a sense of urgency in our voice as we cry out:

"Come, Holy Spirit, Come!"

Pontiff Asks for Amnesty, Faith and Charity

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul, in a special document proclaiming 1975 a Holy Year, has asked governments throughout the world to consider the granting of amnesty to prisoners, in accord with a Holy Year tradition.

The Pope read his solemn proclamation in St. Peter's Basilica on Ascension Thursday.

Tracing the tradition of the Christian Holy Year back to its roots in pre-Exilic Judaism, when

every 50th year was a Jubilee Year, or year of remission, in which debts were pardoned and slaves freed, the pontiff said:

"We would like to express the humble and sincere desire that in this present Holy Year, as in

previous ones, the proper authorities of the different nations should consider the possibility of wisely granting an amnesty to prisoners, as a witness to clemency and equity — especially to those who have

given sufficient proof of moral and civic rehabilitation, or who may have been caught up in political and social upheavals too immense for them to be held fully responsible."

Pope Paul also made a special appeal to the Catholics to sanctify the Holy Year by special devotion to "works of faith and charity."

"Once more we make a particularly strong appeal on behalf of developing countries and of peoples still afflicted by hunger and by war," he said. "Let special attention be given to the many needs which haunt man today: to the finding of employment by which man can provide for the needs of life, to housing, which so many lack, to schools, which need so much assistance, to social and medical aid, and to the development and safeguarding of decent, public moral standards."

Pope Paul will solemnly inaugurate the Holy Year at 11:30 p.m. on Dec. 24. Following a long tradition, he will knock with a ceremonial hammer on the "holy doors" of St. Peter's, which have been sealed closed since Dec. 24, 1950, the date that marked the close of the Church's last Holy Year.

The doors will open and the pontiff will enter the Basilica and proceed down the aisle to the High Altar, where he will celebrate Midnight Mass.

Referring to the door-opening ceremonial, the Pope said, "May the holy doors which we shall open on the night of Christmas Eve be a sure sign of a renewed approach to Christ. Who alone is 'the Way and the Door to salvation.'"

The Bishop's Public Appointments



June

- 2—Twenty-fifth Jubilee of Reverend Edward E. Steinkirchner, Celebration of the Eucharist and Homily, Holy Ghost Church, Coldwater — 12:15 p.m.
- 3—Seneca-Cayuga Regional Conference, Sacred Heart Parish, Auburn — 6:30 p.m.
- 4—Confirmation, Holy Cross Church, Dryden — 7:45 p.m.
- 5—Priests' Council Meeting, Episcopal Residence, Victor — 1 p.m.
- 6—Financial Advisory Board Meeting — 11 a.m.
- 8—Fiftieth Jubilee of Reverend William J. Devereaux, Celebration of Eucharist and Homily, St. Columba Church, Caledonia — 5:30 p.m.
- 9—Twenty-fifth Jubilee of Reverend Joseph P. Beatini, Celebration of Eucharist and Homily, St. Francis Xavier Church — 12:15 p.m.
- 9—13—Annual Priests' Retreat, Becket Hall — 9 p.m.
- 13—Graduation Exercises of McQuaid Jesuit High School, Eastman Theatre — 7:45 p.m.
- 14—Celebration of Eucharist and Homily with Ordination Class of 1974, Episcopal Residence, Victor — 5 p.m.
- 15—Diocesan Sisters' Council, Celebration of Eucharist and Homily, Nazareth College Faculty House — 3:30 p.m.
- 16—Jubilee of Reverend Monsignor Leo G. Schwab, Celebration of the Eucharist and Homily, Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Elmira — 12:15 p.m.
- 16—Graduation Exercises of St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing, Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Elmira — 3 p.m.
- 16—Livingston-Steuben Regional Conference, St. Joseph's, Wayland — 7 p.m.
- 17—20—Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass.
- 21—Celebration of Eucharist and Homily in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Victory Church — 12:10 p.m.
- 23—Installation of Parish Council, Celebration of Eucharist and Homily, St. Salome's Church — 11 a.m.
- 23—Twenty-fifth Jubilee of Reverend Andrew W. Teuschel, Celebration of the Eucharist and Homily, St. Joseph Church, Rush — 4 p.m.
- 24—Graduation Exercises of Nazareth Academy, Eastman Theatre — 8 p.m.
- 25—New York State Bishops' Meeting — New York City.
- 27—Celebration of Eucharist and Homily with Jubilee Class of 1949, Episcopal Residence, Victor — 5 p.m.
- 29—Radio Message, Family Rosary Network — 7 p.m.
- 30—Fiftieth Jubilee of St. Theodore's Church, Gates, Celebration of the Eucharist and Homily — 12:30 p.m.