

## Pentecost 2010/2

On the day of Pentecost, they were all gathered in the same place. The same place. Do you know what that same place was? The same place as the last supper. The same place where they experienced the presence of the Risen One on Easter night. The same place where they were told to wait for the coming of the Spirit. That is the upper room or the Cenacle.

Over the years I have spoken of the special relationship I have had with the sisters of the Cenacle, who like those first disciples who gathered with Mary the Mother of Jesus in the upper room in prayer waiting for the gift of the Spirit gather women and men in prayer so that they too may experience the Spirit. I was their chaplain for 10 years at the Brighton Cenacle at 200 Lake Street. It is now an English language school where students from many nations come to learn to speak one language. It never dawned on me until I was writing this homily, the connection between the Pentecost story where people of many languages hear and understand one language and a school where one language is heard and understood by people of many languages. From Cenacle, house of prayer to language school. Very interesting!

These sisters of the Cenacle have experienced many changes over the past years. One of the most challenging has been their mother house in Ronkonkomo had to be leveled and they are in the process of building a new Cenacle in the same place. Actually they have been in the process for a few years now. After they had gone ahead and leveled the old building, displacing the sisters who were living there in the expectation that the building would begin right away they ran into “red tape”. You know what “red tape” is. One bureaucratic delay after another! When I inquired as to how the building process was going, one of the sisters told me that finally the “foundation had been poured”. It seems like they have been waiting forever.

The Spirit works in wonderful ways and this little story has been the inspiration for my homily this morning. I will speak of “red tape” and “pouring a foundation”.

The reason that the celebration of Pentecost is so important for us as a church, why it's seen as the birth of the Church is that the Spirit is “pouring a foundation” on which the church will be built. This experience of transformation in the power of the Spirit that those first disciples received opens them up to seeing the world in totally new ways. They now come to understand that God's spirit

cannot be contained by rule or law or tradition, in fact everything is made new in this moment. This is a new covenant, a new Sinai, a new harvest. The foundation of course is the realization that God has not only raised Jesus from the dead but that JESUS IS LORD. That Easter is not simply a private event affecting only Jesus but the transforming power of God's victory over death in Jesus' suffering and death on a cross is for all peoples and nations. God's spirit -giving is not exclusive. "They were many speaking in one voice. People from many nations could hear them speaking to them in their own language." They did not need interpreters! God's spirit was speaking, singing, signing them with his/her/its "DUNAMIS". (The greek word Dunamis, our word dynamic for power.) God's Holy Spirit-self was doing his/her/its thing, freeing folks from fear, opening their minds and hearts to be OPENED and not hidden behind closed and locked doors of fear, prejudice, exclusion and all the barriers that keep people from recognizing that they are God's beloved, God's children, God's own.

Three weeks ago I preached about the Eucharist and said that after receiving the Eucharist thousands of times in my life, I still don't understand what it's really about and as far as the spirit goes, I don't either. As far as the spirit goes! We cannot imagine the lengths, breadths, depths, heights to which God's Holy Spirit-self

goes to engage us, convert us... that is discombobulate ( a perfect word for me, dis-com-Bob-ulate) us in our narrowness, our smugness, our know-it-all-ness. God's holy spirit-self can not be constrained, limited by our red tape. Whether that "red tape" comes from inside ourselves, putting conditions and codicils on God's love and passion for us or whether it comes from the Church, as institution that stifles the spirit of creative leadership, creative worship, creative love in its multiplicity of forms. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit of God-self is pouring a foundation for the church. And the Spirit is still pouring. No STILL is always the wrong word to use to describe the Spirit. Gods' holy spirit is always active, dynamic: healing, creating, lifting up, opening up, tearing down walls between people, comforting, consoling... you name it the Spirit is always cutting through the red tape of our lives with the blazing red of her fire.

Yes, I am getting carried away. That's what the Holy Spirit does if we let the Holy Spirit be. If we surrender ourselves to his/her/its power, so that we can be reformed in the image and likeness of Jesus the Lord.