

Pentecost A “Reversing the curse of Babel”

Fr. Frank Schuster

The bible tells a story of how, in the beginning, the whole world spoke the same language, using the same words. The people of a kingdom, however, decided they no longer wanted to be subjugated under God. Humanity wanted to see itself as indeed greater than God. Humanity, therefore, built a tower high into the sky so that humanity could claim superiority over God. Of course, in the story God responds with a sense of humor and confused our speech so that no one could understand what the other person is saying. The great city was called Babel, where we get the word babbling from.

My friends, when I talk to people who have suffered broken relationships, either with parents, children, or spouses, they all share a similar experience. When communication breaks down, relationships are soon to break down as well. When communication breaks down between different political parties in government, our government leaders start to babble. When communication breaks down in family life, the family is thrown into turmoil. When communication breaks down in married life, the marriage becomes an experiment of babbling. When communication breaks down with God in the spirit life, the soul can be reduced to babbling in our prayer life.

My friends, when communication breaks down, even if all parties are speaking in perfect English they are nevertheless reduced to babbling: Everyone talking at each other with no body understanding a single word.

What is the answer to the curse of Babel? It is the feast we celebrate today, Pentecost! On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles like fire (as we saw in our first reading). On Pentecost, all present were able to speak in hundreds of different languages, mirroring Babel, but with one important difference, they could understand each other.

My friends, left to our own devices, left to our own ego that wills to dominate conversations and family policies or social contract between friends, we will always eventually collapse into babbling, with relationships ruined under the rubble we have created for ourselves.

If we, however, allow the Holy Spirit to descend upon our relationships, seek first the Kingdom of God, allow Jesus to be the eyes upon which we view our relationships with our family, friends, co-workers, people of other religions and the world in which we live, all of the sudden we are speaking no longer the language of the ego, but the language of the Spirit, with vocabulary from the heart.

My friends, what makes a family special is not one person or group of persons who happen to share similar DNA. What makes a family special is the Holy Spirit that fans the flame of love that strengthens a family to be able to stick together through good times

and in bad. What makes a community or country special is not one elected official or political party who most everybody likes. What makes a community or country special is the Spirit that makes a country united when push comes to shove. What makes a parish special is not a few parishioners or even the parish priest. What makes Blessed Teresa parish special is the Holy Spirit that makes us a parish family.

For me, what makes Blessed Teresa special are the hundreds of good people who invest their time, talent and treasure for the building up of the Kingdom of God here. The heart of Blessed Teresa are the good people who once fed by Eucharist become Christ to one another and spread that good news throughout the East Side like wind and fire. Indeed, there is only one language in heaven and the vocabulary can be reduced to a single word. Love. Notice the next time communication breaks down into babbling, how the Spirit of love conquers a multitude of sins.