

**All sinners WELCOME!** (Joh 15:26-27; 16:4b – 11; Acts 2:37-47)

\* Friends, in my last sermon I said, *7 days forward, there will be a celebration of Pentecost*. Now the time of watching for it is behind and the feast of Pentecost is at hand. Today the fulfillment of the Event has come into view with changing of the sanctuary color, with the words of greeting of your pastor, the proper readings and using of the suitable hymns. That's all. On the other hand, the fulfillment of Pentecost doesn't receive confirmation with a loud sound from heaven, with the setting of tongues of fire, the speaking by tongues, or with the conversion of the repentant sinners. Rather the excitement of that event is in our mental world, or there may be no excitement at all, if we are in no mood for some reason. However, such an outcome should not discourage us because, in fact, the original Pentecost is never being a paradigm for the Christian world after the apostles. Saying this I am not thinking of the pentecostal Christians who may fantasize all these over-the-top excitements for themselves. As for the rest, I want you to be filled with joy in seeing yourselves as the last fruits of that memorial Event, being useful to the Lord of the harvest and being prepared for every good work., (2Ti 2:21).

\* The gospel reading for today is from (Joh 15:26-27; 16:4b – 11). It can be seen as Jesus' prophetic uttering on carrying out the Mission. By sending the Holy Spirit, God in Christ Jesus would enable the disciples to convict the world about three things. Another reading for today (Acts 2:37-47) speaks from the point of the fulfillment of that prophetic uttering. The coming of the Holy Spirit culminated with a great number of repentant and baptized brothers. For Christ's sake those people were separated from the world and preserved for salvation. In a figurative language those people can be described as the first fruits that sprang up from the tree of life, (Joh 15:5). Therefore, both readings afford the adequate meaning for the theme of the Day, namely, the fulfillment of God's promise in convicting and pardoning. Now, supposing that the point is understood but not still settled, it may force us to ask the Lord for knowledge of truth and guidance for understanding. Let's pray together.

\* Our Father, You sent Your Son to enlighten men in truth and save them from their guilt. And when his mission was done, You sent the Holy Spirit, who convicts us of our guilt and brings the salvation to repentant sinners. Father, we thank You for the Spirit of truth, the Defender of our souls. Father, as Jesus' interceded for us, (Joh 17:24), we received a hope to be saved according to Your will. Make us useful for yourself and bring through us the fruit of life, for the sake of your most glorious name, we pray. Amen.

\* At first I noted that the majority of events in the history of mankind salvation were predicted and expected. But unlike the majority, some people were appointed to enter into a prophetic event as the workmen of that event, like the Magi from East, old Simeon, or blessed Mary;

those people acted on the field framed by Jesus' incarnation. In a similar way was Pentecost, when there was a gathering of one hundred and twenty disciples for a purpose. Those disciples anticipated God's Helper in order to start the Great Commission, that is to say, to make other disciples through proclamation of repentance and forgiveness; just as they were foretold, *But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning,* (Joh 15:26,27). When saying this, Jesus set up the task for the Holy Spirit and the task for the apostles; they will bear truth about him and about sinners. The teaching on account of the work of the Spirit is found in the gospel lesson for today.

\* Again, I noted that Christians don't have a problem with the identification of the Son of God with Jesus Christ, his simultaneous humanity and deity, or that he will come to judge the living and the dead and so forth. There is not also any problem with the identification of the people of God with the sinners. Sometimes I've heard, *We are all sinners;* or, *All Christians are sinners.* Usually, after saying such a remark, the person smirked with a Mona Lisa smile. With reference to this, I recall a sign posted outside of our church by its member. It read, ALL SINNERS WELCOME! After a while, I had a talk with that person. I asked him, *Do you really welcome all sinners?* He said that *all people are sinners, all need the forgiveness of their sins. And the church,* he said, *is the institution that makes a deal with sinners without restriction.* It was a pretty good argument, however, in response, I told, *the Bible doesn't teach that Jesus welcomes all sinners.* Imagine, I said, if a gay guy passed by our church on Sunday morning. Occasionally he noticed the sign, ALL SINNERS WELCOME! and he came in. But when I knew that this person was excommunicated by our sister congregation then what should I do? Should I welcome all sinners any way?

\* Friends, it might seem that this conversation doesn't fit well within the theme of the Day because our perception of Pentecost mostly centers around the powerful preaching in the Spirit, the conversion of thousands, their baptism, and the celebration of the birthday of the first Christian community. All these things happened as the result of Jesus returning to his Father as the Victorious King. We greatly appreciate our Lord for his victory above death and sin. However, that Pentecost doesn't contribute to our spiritual growth except in studying the history of the early church and some applications for Christian dogma.

\* Meanwhile the significance of the event, we learn from John 15,16, carries out a deeper insight on the Mission of the Holy Spirit as followed by the disciples of Jesus Christ. Significantly, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost was not terminated at the end of the apostolic age; the Spirit continues his work until the last sinner will repent, will be baptized, sanctified, and welcomed into the kingdom of God. Friends, I spent a couple hours in order to make a clear for you the profound truth Jesus taught about all sinners.

\* The following is the threefold conviction of guilt on the basis of (John 15:22-27; 16:7-12). Jesus says, If I had not told people about their sins, they would not be guilty; but because I told them and they didn't repent, they don't have the Advocate. Jesus says, if people had not seen my deeds that witness about me as the righteous One sent from the Father, they would not be guilty; but because they persisted in their unbelief and even hated me, they have no the Advocate. Jesus says, if people had judged themselves, they would not be guilty, but because they judged me, they have no Advocate.

\* We are all sinners, no doubt; however, not all sinners have the Advocate, ( in Greek –Paraclete). Friends, imagine a person who shows up in the Heavenly Court without that Advocate. Please ask yourselves, *Isn't h/she lost forever?* I give 100%, that one is! On the other hand, the Book of Acts says that there were three thousand sinners in Jerusalem, they judged themselves, repented, baptized and believed that Jesus went up to his Father and sits at his right side. After that, they were welcomed to commune with the apostles and other disciples.

\* Jesus taught that he will return in Spirit and he will make the repentant sinners by his dwelling place. That is what happened on Pentecost with many sinners, they were transformed into God- bearers, ( Theophorus in Greek). Significantly, from that memorable event until now Jesus continues to challenge and to save with his presence. Those who took the threefold conviction of guilt seriously received the best Advocate, (Mat 10:32), who is faithful; who has all rights to say, NOT GUILTY! NOT GUILTY! NOT GUILTY!

\* Now it is clear, the proper place for the sign, *"All Sinners Welcome"* has been specified with its correct meaning and even found but on the Gates of Hell. The threefold conviction of guilt and the threefold pardoning work is a double edged sword in the "right hand" of the Paraclete. As you can see, his work is not yet done, there are still sooo many sinners to make them eligible for two properly WELCOMES.

Beloved, let our Advocate be with us always, now and in eternity.

Amen.