

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST "C"
JUNE 8/9, 2019

A television commercial for Farmers Insurance Company centers on a school homecoming parade. The school mascot is portrayed by someone whose head consists of a huge flame. The parade makes its way through town with the mascot riding on the back of a convertible. A barely detectable plume of smoke is seen, and someone from the crowd shouts to the mascot: "**Hey! You're on fire!**" The mascot, turning in the direction of the comment responds, "**You bet I am!**" in acknowledgement of school pride and spirit. Someone else shouts: "**You're on fire!**" smoke now clearly visible from the rear of the car. Still unaware of the fire behind him the mascot shouts back, "**Oh yeah!**" Finally, a third individual shouts, "**Look behind you! You're on fire!**" Turning around, the mascot looks behind him, sees the flames and smoke emanating from the trunk of the car, screams, and rolls out of the car on to the street.

Fire is one of the principal symbols of today's celebration of Pentecost. Besides the strong driving wind (the other principal symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that first Pentecost morning), St. Luke tells us "**there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them**" (AA 2:3).

Today Jesus and the Father again pour out their Holy Spirit. Today Jesus and the Father shout to us: "**You're on fire!**"

We often hear, or perhaps ourselves comment, that a person or group of people are "**fired up**" or "**burning**" with emotion and motivation of various kinds. School "pep rallies", homecoming "bonfires", marketing seminars, and the like are all designed to "**fire up**", those participating motivated for action.

Since the fire which severely damaged Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on April 15th numbers of commentaries have been written. Many lamented the damage to an architectural landmark, an historical witness to centuries of French history, an artistic treasure of stained glass and sculpture. All true. However, one commentary I read pointed out something many in the media failed to note-- its primary purpose and function as a church building—the place where

God's people gather; the Eucharist is celebrated; the people sent forth, as one of our dismissal formulas states, "***Go and proclaim the Gospel.***" As this commentator noted, for quite some time, ***this fire***, the fire of an active Catholic faith life, has grown increasingly dim and less heat intensive in France, where on an average Sunday under 20% of self-described Catholics (some would put the figure even lower) participate in Mass and give less than casual interest and adherence to Church teaching. While statistics in our country and here in the archdiocese are not, that dire, yet nationally and diocesan wide we stand at around 35%. This commentator noted that perhaps Notre Dame's fire and the effort to restore the physical structure of the great cathedral, can be the impetus to France's Catholics to recommit themselves to individually and collectively put into practice St. Paul's admonition to his young disciple Timothy: "***Stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control***" (II Tm. 1:6,7). Words of challenge, inspiration and a "call to action" for all of us as well.

How ***fired up*** am I when it comes to the gift of faith I received through baptism and confirmation? Is weekend Mass participation the "source and summit" of my faith where I draw strength from God's word and communion with Jesus and my fellow church members in his body? How and to what extent does the message of the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, coupled with Church moral teaching enter into to my personal, family and professional life? Am I proud to state that I am a Catholic or do I hide my "light" under a bushel basket? Do I feed the "flame of faith" through daily prayer, reading and reflection on the Scripture, study through on-going formation offered by the parish and publications such as our archdiocesan newspaper *The Witness*? As other people experience me is it as a person of compassion, service, forgiveness, one committed to justice for all, especially the least of the world in the model of Jesus or do I just "blend in" even at the cost of compromising my faith for the sake of "go along to get along"?

A great compliment to our faith as others experience it in us would be, "***You're on fire!***" and for us to respond, "***Yeah! You bet I am!***"

A BLESSED PENTECOST TO ALL OF YOU!

9 June, 2019
Father Jim Secora