

## SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST “B”

MAY 26/27, 2012

40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY, DEDICATION OF THE PRESENT ST. CECILIA CHURCH  
(MAY 28, 1972)

Today’s reading from the Acts of the Apostles recounts the events of the first Pentecost Sunday when the twelve Apostles along with Mary the Mother of Jesus and the other early disciples experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit manifested in the sound of a strong driving wind and as tongues of fire hovering over each of them gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, the first church building. At first, I suspect, they were alternately overwhelmed and perplexed about what they were to do in light of this experience. The story quickly moves on to relate that they immediately set out “doing” the work of the church—sharing the gospel message of Jesus. Their mission was very successful. Fellow Jews and converts to Judaism from all over the known world of that day were gathered in Jerusalem for the feast, and as these Spirit infused witnesses spoke of Jesus and the gospel, “each one heard them speaking in their own tongue of the mighty acts of God” (AA 2:11). The following verses note that about “three thousand persons were added to the community that day” (AA 2:41).

In 1899 Father R.C. Eckhart from Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Gilbert celebrated the first Mass here in Ames. The pioneer families of our parish used the Kingkade home to gather each Sunday for Mass. In August of 1899, four lots on Lincoln Way were purchased and these pioneer parishioners along with ten students from what later would become Iowa State University constructed a frame church. Like that original community in Jerusalem, they too were disciples upon whom the Spirit of God had come to rest. They, too, may have wondered about what the future portended. Also, like them, putting their trust in God they set about the work of establishing St. Cecilia Church, planting the seeds that have grown into our parish community today here in Ames. In 1906 a second larger church building was constructed on Lincoln Way. Eventually a daughter parish, St. Thomas Aquinas and the Catholic Student Center were birthed by St. Cecilia’s. All of this culminating this weekend as we observe the fortieth anniversary of the construction and dedication of this, the third St. Cecilia Church, on May 28, 1972.

Much has changed since 1899, 1906, and 1972 in the life of our parish. Today, we number about 1600 families, nearly 6000 individual parishioners. As a parish we offer a wide variety of programs and ministries for the purpose of helping each other prosper in the life of faith. This weekend's celebration coinciding with Pentecost, is a time to celebrate all that God has given us. From the perspective of that first Pentecost Sunday in Jerusalem, or gathered together in the Kingkade home for Mass, the early New Testament Church and our pioneer ancestors could never have envisioned a church or parish as we know them today.

An anniversary is not just a time to look back but also taking stock of the present and charting a course for the future. In today's second reading St. Paul reminds us that each person in the church is given a particular gift by the Spirit to be used for the common good (I Cor. 12:3b-7). During the nearly past three years our parish has been charting a path for the present and the future. Along with the other parishes of the archdiocese, our parish lay advisory bodies have spent time learning about and implementing archdiocesan mandated changes to their organization, and purpose. Over the past eighteen months, our Pastoral Council, Faith Formation Commission, Finance Council and their respective committees along with the Stewardship Committee have been involved in "visioning" processes of various sorts. While physical buildings will always be part of parish life, these efforts are primarily directed to the present and future growth of "the living stones" of the church, we, the people of St. Cecilia's. Like our New Testament and parish pioneers, today's Pentecost celebration and this anniversary observance are a renewed summons to each of us through the Holy Spirit, to personally witness to Jesus and his gospel, to continue building God's kingdom here in this place. Each of us has been given by God those particular gifts he has created for the sake of not only our own, but the salvation of the world. Each of us is called to share it in God's work. We are the beneficiaries of our New Testament and parish pioneers generously sharing their gifts. What legacy of faith will each and all of us pass on to those who will come after us forty, or a hundred and thirteen years from now?

"Father, in this visible house that you have let us build, you build up for yourself the temple that we are and cause your Church to spread throughout the world." As we celebrate this moment in our history, this Pentecost, continue the work of your Spirit in each of us. Amen.