

## SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST “A”

MAY 31, 2020

### 45<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF PRIESTHOOD ORDINATION

Two experiences come to mind this morning as we conclude our Easter celebration on this feast of Pentecost.

First. On my trip to the Holy Land in November 2018 we visited the room in Jerusalem known as the Cenacle. It is the room where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper. It is the room where the first apostles huddled in fear after Jesus’ death and where, despite the locked door, the risen Jesus appeared to them on Easter night healing and confirming their faith as he showed them his wounds and breathed on them the Holy Spirit sending them forth on mission as we heard in today’s gospel. Finally, it is the room in St. Luke’s account from the Acts of the Apostles in the first reading where Mary, the mother of Jesus, and those first believers experienced the sound of a strong driving wind howling outside and experienced tongues “as if of fire” descending and hovering over all of them. It’s also, the room from which Peter and the others went and began the preaching of the Gospel

Visiting the Cenacle reminded me that the Pentecost event has, and continues, to give birth to churches, including our own. Like the beginnings in Jerusalem, our parish began small. In the nineteenth century our pioneer ancestors gathered together in small groups in the homes of families north of town near where Sts. Peter and Paul Church is located today. A priest would come periodically to celebrate Mass and administer the other sacraments. Eventually as the town of Ames grew parishioners established and built a wood frame building on the east edge of town on what is now Lincoln Way and named their church, “Good Shepherd.” In 1906 a new church was built in town next to the present DOT building. In 1972 our present church building was built. In the 1940s with increase of the number of Catholics in Ames, St. Cecilia’s was divided becoming the mother church to St. Thomas Aquinas. From these humble beginnings, the Catholic community in Ames we know today began. As we continue to “shelter in place”, our homes or apartments are the “cenacles”, where gathered in Jesus alone or two, three or a few more, Jesus comes today and again pours out the Spirit. While not accompanied by a howling

wind or tongues of fire hovering over our heads, the Risen Jesus breathes the same Holy Spirit upon us.

Second. At this hour forty-five years ago this morning, I was ordained to the priesthood. The refrain from one of the hymns sung during the Ordination Mass came from the 61<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Book of Isaiah: *The Spirit of God rests upon me. The Spirit of God consecrates me. The Spirit of God bids me go forth to proclaim his peace, his joy.* In the liturgical act of the laying on of hands Archbishop James Byrne, following the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Pentecost mystery became a personal experience for me bestowing the office of the ministerial priesthood. While specific to me in the order of the priesthood to share in the headship of Jesus in leading and caring for the members of the Church, each of us through Baptism and Confirmation have experienced a personal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a personal Pentecost. The Spirit of God, rests upon, and, consecrated us. The Spirit bids each of us to go forth and proclaim the Gospel through the particular state in life to which we have been called by God. This call and mission is signified by our heads being anointed with Chrism at baptism and confirmation, and of my hands being anointed at ordination. In the everyday events and activities of life all of us are called through word and action to give witness to Jesus. Our witness may not have the “special effects” we read about in the Acts of the Apostles, but is no less real.

A priest professor gave me these words of wise counsel before I left St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore to return to the archdiocese to be ordained: “Jim, work as if everything depended on you. Pray as if everything depended on God.”

Wise counsel for me then, and still today. Wise counsel for all of us this Pentecost and always.

31 May, 2020  
Father Jim Luoca