

**Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez for the  
Mass for Movements and New Communities  
St. Joseph Catholic Church, Jacksonville  
Pentecost Eve – May 18, 2013**

Exodus 19:3-8a, 16-20b

Romans 8:22-27

John 7:37-39

In the Year of the Holy Spirit – 1998 – John Paul II called all the movements and new communities to Rome and he said: “The movements, the new communities are providential expressions of the new springtime brought forth by the Spirit with the Second Vatican Council, (they) announce the power of God’s love which in overcoming divisions and barriers of every kind, renews the face of the earth to build the civilization of love.” (Homily of Pentecost, May 30, 1998)

In this vigil Mass of Pentecost, I invite you to recognize the Holy Spirit as the source of the vitality of your associations, your desire to grow in prayer, your love for the church born in Pentecost, your zeal for the spreading of the Gospel and your concern to penetrate society with Gospel values. Take notice and celebrate it for it is the Spirit, the breath of the Risen Christ, who is to be, praised for all the good you – as his instruments – do for others!

As you look at our Eucharistic assemblies in our parishes you notice that there is an amazing diversity of races, cultures, languages, countries of origin; some see this diversity as a challenge, some even fear this diversity. Some feel inadequate to engage socially with this new demographic yet if you pay attention to Pentecost when according to St. Luke, the church was born, the church was born Catholic; there is the Mother of the Lord, and the Apostles receiving the Holy Spirit in the midst of many cultures, nations and languages. The church embraces diversity from day one.

Diversity is not to divide or create conflicts but in God’s plan, diversity is to become a source of unity, for God intends the whole planet to be one family of many colors and tones and looks. This is what Connie Paré said about this birth of the church in what she calls celebrating our widespread Church:

“Shortly after being filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles were joined by Jews and Gentiles from different regions and nations, women and men of diverse customs and languages who were all filled with the same Spirit. Together they celebrated God’s deeds and power at work in their lives. Today, as Church, we welcome people from all parts of the world. Sometimes there are new groups who have not been part of our Church for long and who come with different customs and traditions. As Christians, our faith calls us to move beyond simple accommodation to become people who welcome, celebrate and embrace each other’s differences as we share our experiences of God’s deeds and power at work in our lives.”

As we celebrate Pentecost, let us remember that the diversity around us is a source of blessings

through which we can better experience God's love in countless new ways. May we be signs of openness and generosity of Spirit." (Living with Christ, May 2013, p.130)

Tonight I invite you to attune your movements and new communities to the great priority of our church: to commit to promote the New Evangelization, the priority of our church...How?

1. To promote with passion the Sunday Mass. The recognition of Sunday as the day of the Lord needs greater conviction in our families. It is the Spirit that draws us to the Eucharistic Lord. It is the Spirit who inspires the Scriptures; it is the Spirit that transforms the bread and wine into the living Christ. It is the Spirit that sends off the "body of Christ" – The faithful to society to make a difference in edifying the city of God where peace and justice, truth and life develop a civilization of love.
2. To give priority to formation rooted in catechesis, in adult catechesis particularly. Our faith needs to be better known and better internalized in an organic way integrating all our relations. As the lay faithful deal with multiple moral issues, the church needs the lay faithful to witness integrity as faithful Catholics – in deep union with your local bishop and the Holy Father. The Magisterium of the church is a service for all for the Spirit has adorned the faith community with a teaching charism.
3. Let us deepen the church of the Eucharist by practicing what John Paul II called, "the spirituality of communion." Where the Spirit is, the artisans of collaboration, communication and cohesiveness thrive.

Tonight, Mass is a great opportunity to appreciate what other movements are doing, to rejoice for the work of the Spirit. Each movement is a gift to be appreciated and welcomed.

Have you noticed how in every celebration of the Eucharist, there is a prayer called "Paracelses?" At the Eucharistic prayer, the priest-celebrant lays hand over the offerings and prays. Its purpose is to plead the Spirit to come and transform the bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ. It is consoling to realize that no human would have this power but the Holy Spirit! Amen.