

## The Feast of Pentecost

By: Fr. Greg Ames

I would suspect that for many parents, a highlight is when their child speaks the first word. I read an article that focused on the nonverbal communication that takes place between parents and children before the first words. Studies indicate that teaching babies simple signs and gestures before they can talk is a way of stimulating development. Some have found that a child who had been encouraged to use signs to communicate being tired, or hungry, as a baby showed some intellectual advantages later on. There is actually a book called *Baby Signs*, that focuses on this idea. But the author cautions: *Giving a baby an edge is not the reason to sign. It's not a 'better baby' gimmick. We really feel the gift is to the parent-infant relationship. The main reason to do it is to enable the baby to communicate what they need and see, to share their world with you.*

### Yet we hear them speaking in their own tongues of the mighty acts of God . . .

Every day we use thousands of words to communicate. Maybe because technology is so advanced, we fail, as adults, to use those signs, those gestures that enable us to share our world with others. A hand on the shoulder; a finger placed to the lips; a hand reaching out. The Feast of Pentecost is the birthday of the Church; the beginning of the community realizing that they must reveal Jesus to the world. Sure, someone would write stuff down; others would preach, and still others would instruct. They came to realize it would be not the words, but the gestures, the signs they used that would proclaim Jesus' message; and the Holy Spirit would guide them.

Each week you come here; sure we use a lot of words in the prayers, responses and osngs to communicate what we need and what we see and what we believe. But each week when we gather as Church there are gestures and signs that communicate even more; gestures we might take for granted:

**THE SIGN OF THE CROSS** It is no small thing that we begin and end the liturgy with that gesture. We use it without even thinking. But we can't forget its significance: my entire life belongs to Christ. The Corinthians were a rough crowd: often bickering and complaining; some in the community though they were better than everybody else. Paul tells them that when you live under the sign of the cross, you realize that every-

one's life has value, everyone is important, and each person is given the Spirit to enrich the community. What could be different about your life if you did not unconsciously make the sign of the cross, but each time you did asked, how do I reveal Jesus to others?

**THE SIGN OF PEACE** When the sign of peace was introduced at Mass 40 years ago, a lot of people did not like it; it refused to do it. Now all these years later we all do it. Some worry it has become a trite moment, a kind of how you doing, what's going on. In the story of Pentecost from Acts, the disciples preach and everyone understands them. This is not about being able to speak world languages. It is about realizing there is a language that goes beyond words; the language of the heart. Whether we live in Iraq or Argentina or Illinois; whether we speak French or German or Arabic; it does not matter. We are all afraid, we all have dreams, we can all b mean, we can be loving, we all need God. Peace in our world, in our lives comes when we get that. So when you stretch your hand in peace, could you realize that the Spirit gives you power to create peace.

**THE SIGN OF THE EUCHARIST** At this table, in read and wine, the real presence of Jesus comes to us, just as he came to those disciples in the locked room. Maybe we come so often we take for granted that he is here. But it is your raised hands that should remind you; it is your raised hands that are also the sign of the Eucharist. For it is a gesture that says I who have received Jesus am willing and open and ready to let the Spirit guide me. My hands are ready to be the hands of Jesus. How powerful our lives would be if each time you opened your hands to receive the Eucharist, you opened another part of your heart to forgiveness, to understanding, to love.

While I had not watched every episode, I did see the finale of American Idol. When Fantasia won, it was interesting to see that amid the hugs and tears, she had her hand raised and a finger to the sky. She sings in her Gospel choir at church; it is a gesture that points away from me, and toward God: it is God who gets the glory, it is God who makes all things possible. So maybe you will never be the American Idol. But you have received the Spirit of Jesus. Perhaps as you leave today you might ask, how does my life point others to Him?

## READINGS OF THE WEEK

Acts 2:1-11

Romans 8:8-17

Luke 14:15-26

May 19, 2013

## 真 正 的 問 題

蔡 惠 民 神 父

有一天，動物園的管理員突然發現園裡的袋鼠跑出來了。把袋鼠抓回來後，園長馬上開會檢討，大家一致認為是柵欄的高度太低，袋鼠才跳得出去。於是，園長請鐵工立即把柵欄的高度由原本的五公尺加高到十公尺。第二天，袋鼠還是跑到外面來，園長想高度還是不夠吧！又請工人再把高度加到十五公尺。沒想到第三天，居然又看到袋鼠在外面的草地上遊玩。園長大為緊張，決定一不做二不休，索性將籠子的高度加到三十公尺。加高之後，長頸鹿和袋鼠在閒聊：「你們猜，這些人會不會繼續加高你們的柵欄？」長頸鹿問道。「這很難說！」袋鼠說：「如果他們再繼續忘記關門的話！」

究竟做一個基督徒或天主教徒有甚麼與別不同？聖神降臨節是慶祝教會誕生的日子，也是慶祝基督徒團體誕生的日子，為甚麼這個團體的誕生值得我們慶祝？如果這個團體與別不同的地方是信仰基督，那麼，我們今天是否為信仰基督而感到自豪？我們是否珍惜這份信仰的得來不易？是否想過要盡能力將這份信仰傳授給下一代？

今天，很多基督徒不再為自己的信仰傳統而感到自豪。有人說：因為時代變了，我們必須要接受宗教多元的事實。基督信仰不外是眾多宗教的一種，如果條條大路通羅馬的話，我們何必要為自己基督徒的身份而沾沾自喜？如果一個基督徒這樣看自己的信仰，內裡自然不會感到催迫向他人宣講自己的信仰。如果基督信仰只是平平無奇，有需要為這信仰而感恩嗎？如果基督並無為世界帶來與別不同驚喜，為甚麼硬要我的孩子接受這份禮物？如果人生是殊途同歸，基督的教導為甚麼要特別視為真理？如果我們不正視問題的所在，只會將基督徒不珍惜自己信仰的普遍現象，歸咎在一些外在因素上。例如，有人認為彌撒的講道太沉悶，歌唱太嚴肅，禮儀應加入一些類似棟篤笑和演唱會的氣氛。我無意否認講道脫離生活現實，禮儀千篇一律，缺乏祈禱共融氣氛的事實。不過，真正的問題是內在的。

早期教會雖然沒有活潑生動的道理，也沒有舒適美觀的聚會地點，但很多人卻被這信仰深深吸引，甚至願意捨棄自己的生命。為甚麼？因為他們發現基督信仰改變了他們的生命。他們珍惜這信仰，以各種不同的方法，急不及待的向身邊的人宣講。究竟這信仰有甚麼與別不同呢？簡單地說，或許就是耶穌基督的死亡和復活所帶給我們的新生。不過，作為一個天主教徒，我們信仰與眾不同的地方，更加是教會內多而一的經驗。

天主教原文解作「大公」、「全面」和「一體」，意思是一個包容的教會，由眾多不同的基督徒所組成。在這個教會中，基督以不同的語言向我們說話，但都是同一的真理；耶穌給眾人不同的神恩，但都是出自同一的施與者；基督有不同的肢體，但都是同一的身體。因此，天主教會所珍惜的並不是局限在某一形式和時空的信仰。

為使信仰的多元不致陷入混亂，教會內有完美的法律、聖統制和聖傳，也有一些具體的聖人和神學家，為我們提供生活和思想上的具體指引。此外，在滿載基督恩寵的生活中，我們有聖事作標記，特別在人生的不同階段，標誌天主的臨在。雖然我們經驗基督在我們內心的說話和推動，但籍著一些熱心敬禮，教會提醒我們與祂的親密接觸。在基督普遍臨在世界的事實中，教會辨別時代的徵兆，或者選擇與貧窮人站在一起，以突顯基督的具體面容。

不過，教會有形可見的合一，目的是要指向維護信仰的大公與多元。所以，基督不單在法律和聖統中；不單在聖事中；不單在聖經中；不單在訓導當局中；不單在熱心敬禮中；不單在窮人的生活中，而是在所有的標記中。祂要透過這些標記接觸和祝福我們。沒有一個標記高於另一個標記，只有基督是才是最高的標記。這就是我們珍惜的信仰。

有一次，一個神父問一班天主教同學會的學生：「你們認為信仰是否值得與他人分享，甚至向他人傳福音？」其中一個同學認為：「如果你真的愛一個人或喜歡某樣東西，你自會與人分享。當你墮入愛河，你不其然會告訴其他人內心的喜悅。如果你認為當天主教徒的確與別不同的話，你自會將這禮物送給你喜愛的人。」那麼，真正的問題是：我們是否珍惜自己的信仰？我們是否愛這世界，甚至急不及待將最好的一份送給這個世界？

摘自「公教報」

### 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 五 月 十 九 日

宗 2:1-11 ; 羅 8:8-17 ; 若 14:15-26