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## PENTECOST

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU  
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault  
(Fontgombault, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023)

*Sermonem... non est meus.*  
The word... is not Mine.  
(*Jn 14:24*)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
My dearly beloved Sons,

**A**FTER RECEIVING THE LORD’S blessing just before His Ascension, the disciples have gone back with great joy to Jerusalem. Now opens for them the time of their first great retreat, during which they remain in prayer with Mary. A time that brings peace, maturation, purification. In the silence, the disciples prepare their souls to the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by the the Lord.

The fruits of His coming on Pentecost morning don’t remain hidden for very long, and upset the crowd of devout Jews who have come from the farthest known places of the earth to adore in Jerusalem: “We have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”<sup>a</sup> Not only do these men understand them in their own tongues, but they hear the wonderful works of God being proclaimed: “What Thou hast hidden from wise and prudent men, Thou hast revealed to little ones.”<sup>b</sup>

*a. Acts 2:11.*

*b. Lk 10:21.*

God is the first one to wonder at His creation. Such is the conclusion of the first chapter of Genesis: “And God saw all the

a. *Gn 1:31*. things that He had made, and they were very good.”<sup>a</sup> The wonders of God are the reflection of His active presence in the human history, and in all human histories. God holds everything in His hand: the world, and the Church, and each of our lives.

These *magnalia Dei*, “wonders of God”, which encompass the whole history of salvation, are going to be revealed by the apostle St. Peter in his speech after Pentecost. The apostles, led and strengthened by the Spirit, are going to make themselves His fellow workers by their words. Friends of Jesus, they are going to become the guardians of His commandments.

Whereas confusion is striking more and more Christians, the Lord’s words told by St. John invite us to carry out a discernment of doctrines. “The word which you have heard is not Mine.”<sup>b</sup> Too many theologians or prelates can affirm that, while at the same time being mouthpieces for mundane doctrines. But the Lord adds, as regards His word: “It is the Father’s, Who sent Me.”<sup>c</sup> The Lord then assures:

d. *Jn 14:26*. The Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.<sup>d</sup>

Pentecost appears as the opposite of Babel. In Babel, the word of men sets out to oppose the tongue of God. In Pentecost, the word of God makes itself the tongue of men. Assuredly, this word is demanding. It is but an echo of the Lord’s teaching, “Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect,”<sup>e</sup> or also, “A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another. As I have loved you, that you also love one another.”<sup>f</sup>

To be perfect as the Father, to love as Jesus loves: the emissary of God doesn’t invite to half-measures, but to perfection. Following a long line of apostles and holy popes, on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1968, 55 years ago, Pope Paul VI signed the encyclical *Humanae vitae*, words written in the light of the Spirit, and dedicated to the delicate subject of birth regulation, words reasserting the eminent dignity of man and woman, images of God in the very act of procreation, words that refused to see either of them degraded to a mere object. This text was to give rise to many oppositions in a Church that wished to be up to date with society. It still

gives rise to oppositions today, since some deem it should be superseded.

Following the Lord is demanding. Do we have the choice? The Church cannot propose to her children the alternative of mediocrity, of compromise with the world. While she points to a good but difficult aim, she also reminds us that God is merciful, and invites us to hope and trust in the divine help.

The outpouring of the Spirit that attends the Church in her history is a guarantee for Christians. In the continuity and consistence of the holy popes' teaching, it is the work of the Spirit that keeps unfolding. For the Christians, this continuity and consistence is precisely the criterion for discernment.

The outpouring of the Spirit is also for each of us grounds for a great hope. The Lord doesn't leave us orphans. He keeps His promise and walks everyday at our side, as His beloved children, by the presence of the Spirit.

The history of the Church bears witness to His action. The Vatican II council invited us to be "nourished by the study of the Holy Fathers, and other Doctors, and monuments of tradition."<sup>a</sup>

Among these texts is the *Letter to Diognetus*, written between 120 and 200, the author of which is unknown, as well as its recipient. This text belongs to the apologetic literature. Despite persecutions, the Christians make bold to make a defence [*ἀπολογία*, *apologia*] so as to give an account for their hope before the world, as St. Peter had advised them.<sup>b</sup>

Here are a few lines from this text, which regretfully we cannot quote more extensively, exposing the vocation of Christians:<sup>1</sup>

*Christians are to the world what the soul is to the body. [...] The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.*

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1. N. 6, SC 33, pp. 65-67 (emphasis ours).

Cf. [https://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit\\_20010522\\_diogneto\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20010522_diogneto_en.html)

a. *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 19.

b. Cf. 1 P 3:15.

Christians love those who hate them, just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together. [...] So lofty is the function which God has appointed to Christians that they are not permitted to desert it.

This demanding mission is still topical, and no Christian can fulfil it without the help of the Holy Spirit. The sign of His active presence in a place, in a soul, is the establishment in it of peace, but not a precarious and unstable peace. The peace of and in the Spirit is a reign of peace: peace over the world, peace in the Church, peace in families, peace in the hearts.

If "Peace begins with a smile," as Mother Teresa used to say, then the Holy Spirit is the smile of God. Let us receive this smile until we are transfigured.

In the strength of the Spirit, let us become fellow workers of the truth and peacemakers. Come, O Holy Spirit, fulfil the hearts of Thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Thy love, the fire of Thy peace!

Amen, Alleluia.

