

Feast of Pentecost A (6/12/11 – *Christ Pours Out His Holy Spirit*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

The Holy Spirit of our Lord would put to us three questions through the Word of the *Holy Gospel* for this **Feast of Pentecost**. The first question is this: *Are you thirsty?* Jesus – in the Holy Spirit inspired text before us – is not speaking of physical thirst, of course. Soon enough our days will be scorching hot and dry. We will know, once again, what it is to be really thirsty – especially when working outside for any length of time. You know what I mean – when the lips are parched and the throat feels like sandpaper with every breath. Dwell on that thought for a moment ... and consider Jesus' Word – but with your soul in mind.

If anyone thirsts, Jesus says [JN 7.37]. *Are you thirsty?* Are there times – hopefully always ... including this morning – when your soul longs for the quenching Word of the Gospel? Perhaps you have had a difficult week. You have struggled with daily life – relationships ... health ... finances – and sinfully wondered if God cares about you ... will truly take care of you. You have fallen into dreadful sin again – many times over. Indeed, you have fallen many times into the **same** sin. Your own sins, the sins of those around you, and sin in the world in general have affected you – caused you to suffer ... caused you to feel the pain ... parched your soul and spirit ... made you long for relief ... thirst-quenching relief. You have neglected to consider God's Word in the morning when you arise ... during the day as you walk (or drive) along the way ... at night when you lie down ... at meals.

We take for granted so much that God pours out upon us richly and daily – both in our physical and in our spiritual lives. We grow accustomed to what God gives us. And we begin think it is our **due** – that we have earned it ... deserve it. Thus, we neglect to thank and praise Him for it. And now – here in this place – the Holy Spirit through His Word convicts us of our sins ... and we thirst for the quenching flood of forgiveness. *Are you thirsty?*

That is the Holy Spirit's work, you know – part of it, at least. ***When He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment***, Jesus says about His sending of the Spirit [JN 16.8]. It is the Holy

Spirit's task to convict you of sin – your actual sins ... and your sinful flesh that has no natural thirst for the things of God (not even His forgiveness).

Now that is a sad commentary on just how fallen our human flesh is! Our flesh – with regard to spiritual things – is so very corrupted and messed up, that it does not even know when it ought to be thirsty. The original sin that has corrupted everyone born of human parents – all of us ... and the whole world – is like one of those diet drugs. It fools the body and brain into thinking it is already satisfied ... no longer in needing anything more. And that is fine for someone who is actually getting more than is necessary. But what if a terribly malnourished – starving – person were to take it? The result would be death – death by starvation and dehydration. So the question comes before us again: *Are you thirsty?* Or, have you let your sinful flesh so disguise your real need for the thirst-quenching Gospel of forgiveness that you think you are “full” on your own?

The second question the Holy Spirit would ask us – through today's Scripture reading – is this: *Do you know and believe that Jesus Christ is the One – and only One – Who can quench your thirst? **On the last, great day of the Feast, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”*** [JN 7.37] It is not enough simply to come to Jesus ... seeking guidance from Him – as if He were just some Prophet or Holy Man Who can point the way ... or even lead the way. For, as we heard not too many Sundays ago, Jesus IS the Way – **and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Him** [JN 14.6]. The Holy Spirit points the way – to Jesus and His thirst-quenching work of salvation. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth ... righteousness ... holiness of living ... and eternal life.

Another way to ask this second question is this: *Have you come to Jesus to drink?* Drink of His holy life. Drink of His innocent suffering and death. Drink of His glorious Resurrection and Ascension! Drink of Christ! Let Him quench your thirst for that righteousness that is outside of you – so that His righteousness fills you ... becomes yours ... through Baptism and faith.

In the Old Testament, God has given us a glimpse of this blessed reality – that Jesus is the One Who alone can quench our thirst for forgiveness and

righteousness. In the desert, the children of Israel were parched. In accord with their sinful flesh, they immediately began to doubt God's love and provision for them. ***Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?*** [EXO 17.3] Yet in His mercy, God gave them water to drink from a rock. Christ is our Rock from Whom flows the life-giving waters of the forgiveness of sins [1COR 10.4].

Have you come to Jesus to drink? He promises to satisfy your hunger and thirst for righteousness – just as He proclaimed to those who were following Him in the previous chapter: ***I am the bread of life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst*** [JN 6.35]. Indeed, God had foretold that He would quench the spiritual thirst of His people throughout the Old Testament, with promises such as these: ***With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation*** [ISA 12.3]. ***For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.*** [ISA 44.3] ***And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail*** [ISA 58.11].

That last quote brings us to the final question the Holy Spirit would have us consider this day; namely: *Do you realize that God has quenched your thirst to overflowing?* In verse 38 of our *Gospel* text, Jesus says: ***Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”*** [JN 7.38] We sometimes live out our lives as if God had not quenched our thirst – as if we were not forgiven ... as if we were not filled with the righteousness of Christ. We become discouraged – as if we had not been filled already with a sure and certain future hope. At other times we seem to “hoard” Christ's love and forgiveness for us – refusing to forgive ... refusing to give it to ... those around us. Satisfied to have our own spiritual thirst quenched, we neglect to give a cup of spiritual water to our neighbor – whose need is just as great as our own.

But consider well what our Savior says here. ***Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”***

Rivers of living water! There is no sin of yours so great but that the overwhelming flood of Jesus' forgiveness is greater. Yes, our sins are great ... and many. But our Lord is not satisfied in merely quenching our thirst. He fills us with His forgiveness, life, and salvation ... to the point of overflowing! And His forgiveness is never ending! He does not just give us a drop of water ... or a cup ... or a pitcher ... or even a well – but **rivers** (plural) of **living** water ... living and life-giving ... enough for us and for our family members who have hurt us and for a whole world of sinners. To put it another way: Jesus not only quenches your thirst for forgiveness and true, eternal life, but also makes you His blessed instrument to share that never-ending flow of pure love, life, and salvation to those around you.

And He does it all by means of His Holy Spirit, Who works through the Word – and the visible Word of the Sacraments – in you and in the world. As He indicates in the last verse of our *Gospel: **Now this He said about the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*** [JN 7.39]. The Spirit was not yet given, because the Spirit – Whose outpouring we celebrate on this ***Feast of Pentecost*** – had nothing yet to give ... since ***Jesus was not yet glorified***. For the Holy Spirit ***will not speak on His own authority, but rather whatever He hears He will speak ... for He will take what is Christ's and declare it to you*** [JN 16.13-14].

This brings us to the very center of the Gospel message – the glorification of Jesus the Son of God ... by means of His Cross and Resurrection. ***Christ Pours Out His Holy Spirit*** only after His Cross and grave and rising from death. Only after Jesus has said, ***Father forgive them*** [LK 23.34] ... only after He cries out, ***I thirst*** [JN 19.28] ... only after He declares, ***It is finished***, and bows His head and gives up His Spirit [JN 19.30] ... and only after Jesus has risen to life the third day – forever! – does the Spirit have something to say and give. But now that He has been glorified, ***Christ Pours Out His Holy Spirit*** in abundance ... to overflowing ... to quench your thirst for forgiveness, holiness, righteousness, everlasting life, and eternal salvation.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]