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PENTECOST 2018

Dearest Sisters and Friends,

A very happy and holy feast of Pentecost to you all! May you be filled with joy, faith and courage as you open your hearts to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit on this great feast.

It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that enables the Easter 'Alleluia' to resonate through every aspect of our lives. The Holy Spirit helps us to live the new life that we are offered. Joy will triumph over uncertainty, because the promise offered to us by the coming of the Holy Spirit will never be diminished.

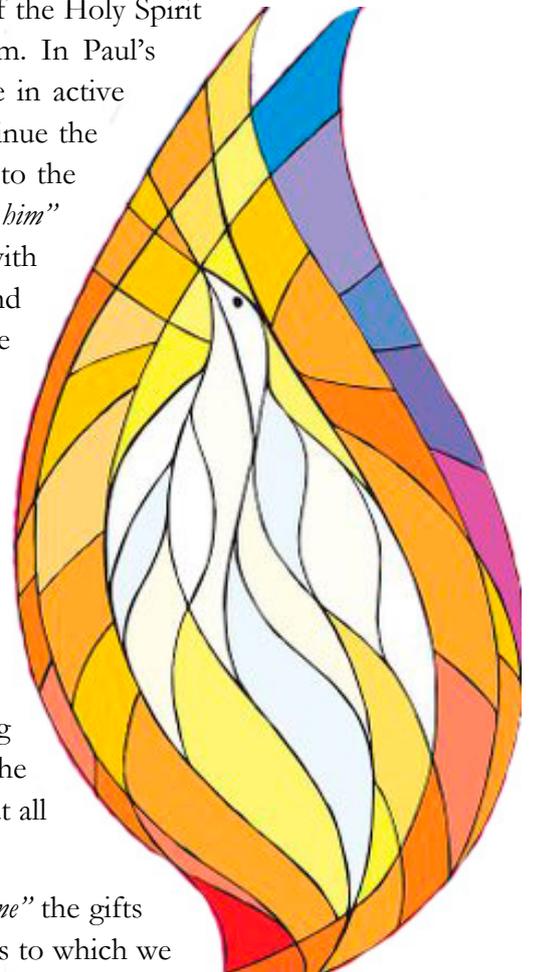
The Feast of Pentecost invites us to reflect deeply on the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our lives today and to look at the ways we respond to them. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he was very much aware that his time in active ministry was running out. He needed to select a person to continue the mission into the future. He chose Timothy as a credible witness to the Gospel and urged him to "*fan into a flame the gifts God had given him*" (2 Tim 1:6) and to continue the work of sharing the Good News with all people. Paul knew this mission would require courage and reliance on the grace of God. Timothy kept on feeding the flame of God's gifts and spoke openly of Christ. He was aflame with God's love and always knew that the promises of Jesus would never fail him.

That same message is given to each of us. We are invited to replace fear with courage and hope and not limit ourselves in the fullness of our response to God's call. As we face the challenges that life brings, let us call on the grace of the Spirit to sustain the fire within us and help us be courageous in sharing the Word of God. Let us practise in our own lives what we have been teaching and preaching – love, forgiveness, peace, justice and hope. The same power that transformed the early disciples is available to us at all times.

With the Holy Spirit we can consciously choose to "*fan into a flame*" the gifts God has given to each of us individually and to the various groups to which we belong.

What gifts are you being called to fan into a flame?

It is clear from the words of Jesus himself, "*how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*" (Lk. 11:13), that God longs to give the Holy Spirit to us and that all we have to do is ask. The Spirit often works quietly and secretly but we also need to be prepared for wind and fire!



Do not doubt that God will give his Spirit to all who seek him. We can be certain that the direction of a life led by the Spirit will bring fulfilment and enable that person to give glory to God.



When we have an open and generous heart, it is so much easier to recognise the voice of God's spirit. If our attitude is right, and if we really want to hear that voice, then we can be sure that we will hear it. The limits to the effectiveness of the Spirit in our lives are the ones we set ourselves. When we say 'yes' to the Holy Spirit from the depths of our hearts, we recognise the gentle power of God's spirit within us.

The recent document from Pope Francis, 'Gaudete et Exsultate' (Rejoice and be Glad), is a call to 'holiness' – a simple and practical guide to living our lives in honesty and truth.

Francis says, *"This holiness to which the Lord calls you will grow through small gestures"*. (16) He continues, *"Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace."* (34)

Holiness is not about being a special sort of person or living apart from the world but about being a good next-door neighbour, finding a better way of doing what we do already, and carrying out ordinary acts in an extraordinary way. Holiness needs times of quiet, solitude and silence. Pope Francis asks, *"Are there moments when you place yourself quietly in the Lord's presence, when you calmly spend time with him, when you bask in his gaze? Do you let his fire inflame your heart? Unless you let him warm you more and more with his love and tenderness, you will not catch fire."* (151)

The Holy Spirit is always with us, always in our hearts. If we listen to him he teaches us the path of wisdom, which is seeing with God's eyes, listening with God's ears, loving with God's heart, and judging with God's judgment. We just have to ask the Holy Spirit.

When has the presence of the Holy Spirit offered you comfort and consolation at times of difficulty in your life?

One of Nicolas Barré's gifts to us was his total conviction of the power of the Holy Spirit to work wonders in our lives, beyond all our expectations. This conviction came from his own lived experience. He urges us to *"be faithful and allow yourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit, as a feather is carried by the wind"* (L 9). As we continue our journey from the recent Council of the Institute in Kuala Lumpur towards the General Chapter next year, let us *"Stay Awake!"* and allow the Holy Spirit to give new life to the creativity and imagination within each of us - sisters, friends and faithful collaborators - as we search together for the way forward.

So wherever we are today, whatever is happening in our lives, the Spirit is with us. Inspired by the activity of the Holy Spirit, we have the courage to lift our hearts in hope. The Spirit will fill us, making us new.

May the Spirit of Pentecost sweep through your life, your heart, your imagination, and transform you into someone whose heart is on fire with the love of God!

Kimiko, Maria and Noreen join me in assuring you of our prayer as we celebrate the feast of Pentecost once again. Come, Holy Spirit!

Maire

