



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The joys of Easter are so immense that it is insufficient to just confine our celebrations to a single day. If Lent is observed over 40 days, then Easter, the celebration of the Paschal Mystery which is at the heart of our Christian faith, must deserve a longer period of 50 days. Today, the Solemnity of the Pentecost marks the end of Eastertide. In a fitting closure to the season, we will hear the priest solemnly intone the Alleluia at the dismissal at the end of Mass, as he once did on Easter Sunday.

But Pentecost is not just a fitting ending to Eastertide but also marks the birthday or the beginning of the mission of the Church as she receives her Baptism of fire through the descent of the Holy Spirit, who came upon the Apostles and Disciples. Before the inauguration of this Christian feast, Pentecost was already commemorated as an important pilgrimage festival by the Jews - at the natural level, it was a harvest of wheat and at a spiritual level, it commemorated the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. Now, with the inauguration of the new covenant by the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ, this Feast assumes a far greater significance. Today, we also celebrate the fruits and effects of the descent of the Holy Spirit: the completion of the work of redemption, the fullness of grace for the Church and her children, and the gift of faith for all nations.

During this time of the year, several of our communities also celebrate their respective harvest festivals: Kaamatan (Sabah), Gawai (Sarawak) and Penan (Indonesia). KAGAPE is the neologism that has been invented to encompass these three festivities. Though having agrarian roots, like Ponggol of the Tamilians and Chinese New Year, these cultural celebrations have evolved from thanksgiving celebrations for bountiful harvests into occasions for the community to celebrate and renew their fraternal bonds, regardless of ethnicity, religion and background.

The convergence of these various celebrations is no coincidence. Today, indeed is a day we give thanks to God, for the bountiful harvest of the fruits of the Holy Spirit which we witness in our Church, in this parish of the Holy Family in particular. We are reminded that the Church is not merely a human organisation nor is it the product of human invention. We may sow the seeds of the Gospel, but it is the Holy Spirit that confirms the Word by His working, God gives the growth, and the harvest that began with the first fruits of Pentecost, continues now in our midst and through us, until the end of the age.

This Pentecost comes at a time of remarkable challenge and opportunity. We are gradually emerging from the tragedies and restrictions of the pandemic. We continue to witness an economy, badly bruised by the lockdowns and further damaged by gross mismanagement, tottering on the brink of collapse. At the spiritual level, as our parish returns to some form of normalcy, many continue to stay away as they have gotten used to the routine of following online Masses and have not made the decision to return physically. Still others have lost their spiritual bearings, and the Church and faith, have become distant remote realities in their lives.



More than ever, we need a spiritual reawakening, another Pentecost, a recommitment of the members of the Church, to her mission of planting, nurturing and gathering a harvest of souls, especially for those whose faith have grown tepid and dull.

As a start, here are some things which you can do to begin living out the graces and spiritual fruits you've received from the Holy Spirit:

1. Invite a friend or relative to the RCIA, which begins in July;
2. Join a ministry in the parish;
3. Encourage someone to return to Church for Mass;
4. Get involved in your BEC;
5. Sign up for the next formation session;
6. Visit the elderly and homebound;
7. If you've not returned, time to come back to attend Mass in person.

In all our human endeavours, we need the presence of the Holy Spirit, 'the Lord, the Giver of Life', whose gift to the Church and the world we celebrate again, at Pentecost. Let us keep this Feast with that enduring hope that we can begin to repair the damage that has been done and allow the Holy Spirit to breathe new vitality into our Church. Our hope will be strengthened by our prayer. May our constant request be that the Holy Spirit guide us, strengthen our resolve and 'renew the face of the earth'.

To all our friends from Sabah, Sarawak and Indonesia, Selamat Hari Kaaamatan, Gawai dan Penan!

Your loving Shepherds,

Fr Michael Chua, Fr Philip Chua and Fr Bonaventure Rayappan.

Solemnity of Pentecost

5th June 2022

#HFKCOMEHOME