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At the Vigil of Pentecost

As America celebrates this weekend Mother's Day, the Church, too, celebrates Mother's Day in a way more particular and more profound. This evening we await the great Solemnity of Pentecost, the day on which the Lord Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit upon the disciples and on which Holy Mother Church was born from the pierced side of Christ.

When the Holy Father Benedict XVI visited this nation only a few weeks ago, he prayed repeatedly and incessantly for a new a new Pentecost, a new springtime. He said, "I have come to repeat the Apostle's urgent call to conversion and the forgiveness of sins, and to implore from the Lord a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church in this country."¹

The action of the Holy Spirit is intimately connected with the grace of sincere repentance and conversion. Indeed, the Holy Spirit, "the Lord and giver of life" is given to us so that we might live new lives in Christ. We must then remain open to His promptings to conversion. A genuine renewal of faith will only occur if we recover the awareness of sin and of the consequences of sin, if we return to the Lord in the sacrament

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 17 April 2008.

of Penance, seeking his mercy that is our salvation and our life.

Who could deny that we need a new outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit? How many today are unaware that "the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5)? How many today live as though the new life given them by the Holy Spirit means nothing? How many are unaware of the great dignity and holiness to which they are called by virtue of their Baptism?

So many today live in darkness, unable or unwilling to see that Christ is "the light of life" (John 8:12). They live their lives either in gloom and despair or in apathy and indifference. They fill their days with so many things, all in the vain attempt to find the life for which they yearn. Yes, Lord, "send out your Spirit ... and renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:30)!

It takes only a moment's glance around us to see how deeply we need to be renewed by the Spirit.

Who can deny that the present moment is a crossroads... It is a time of great promise, as we see the human family in many ways drawing closer together and becoming ever more interdependent. Yet at the same time we see clear signs of a disturbing breakdown in the very foundations of society: signs of alienation, anger and polarization on the part of many of our contemporaries; increased violence; a weakening of the moral sense; a coarsening of social relations; and a growing forgetfulness of Christ and God. The Church, too, sees signs of immense promise in her many strong parishes and vital movements, in the enthusiasm for the faith shown

by so many young people, in the number of those who each year embrace the Catholic faith, and in a greater interest in prayer and catechesis. At the same time she senses, often painfully, the presence of division and polarization in her midst, as well as the troubling realization that many of the baptized, rather than acting as spiritual leaven in the world, are inclined to embrace attitudes contrary to the truth of the Gospel.²

Yes, we are at a crossroads, both individually and collectively, and there are two ways we can turn, either towards the Lord or away from him.

As we stand at this crossroads, are we not aware that "all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:22-23)?

These interior groanings come from a desire for life, for abundant life! We are all thirsting for life, thirsting for joy and peace, thirsting for God himself, even if we are unaware of the cause of our thirst. Jesus speaks to our groanings, to our thirsting: "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink" (John 7:37).

Too many people today do not recognize these groanings and this thirst for what it truly is and so do not go to Christ. It is the desire for God that causes them to groan and thirst, and they seek to satisfy it with everything but God! And because

² *Ibid.*, Homily, 17 April 2008.

they - even some among us today - live without God and do not sincerely and continually seek him - they say, "Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off" (Ezekiel 37:11). Not so! The Lord says to them and to us: "I will put my spirit in you that you may live" (Ezekiel 37:14).

This life, true life and life in abundance, is the heart of the Gospel! This life is given to the world through the Church, our Mother, through the Sacraments entrusted to her. It is the mission of the Church to proclaim this life anew to every generation. It is the mission of Holy Mother Church not only to proclaim this life, but also to lead all people to this life and to bring all people together in the Church, the Body of Christ.

Let each of us then approach the Church to receive the grace of Christ given through the Sacraments, which have origin in the pierced side of Christ.

For true life - our salvation - can only be found in the reconciliation, freedom and love which are God's gracious gift. This is the message of hope we are called to proclaim and embody in a world where self-centeredness, greed, violence, and cynicism so often seem to choke the fragile growth of grace in people's hearts.³

We must beg the Holy Spirit to awaken in our hearts and greater awareness of this truth. We must follow his promptings to be reconciled with God and so be filled with his joy and love. We must beg the Lord to pour upon us anew the gifts of the Holy

³ *Ibid.*, Homily, 19 April 2008.

Spirit that we received in Baptism and in Confirmation. Not only this, but we must open ourselves to these gifts and cooperate with the grace the Lord gives us.

The power of the Holy Spirit will help us to live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us follow the example of Holy Mary and wait in prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit. With her, let us pray: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love! Amen."