Deacon Mike Kocjancic Homily Pentecost Sunday June 9, 2019

As many times as I've heard it and as many times as I've said the old cliche “never judge a book by its cover”, I'm surprised at the number of times I’ve ignored that advice. I may find a book that I read the outside blurb and I think this book sounds fantastic and of course once I get into it I realize I was totally wrong. See a preview for an upcoming movie about how great it's going to be then I see the movie and I'm very disappointed. And sometimes it's even works when we see others for the first time; we get an impression of them and then once we get to know the person we're probably very disappointed that they didn't live up to what we had seen.

It's so easy today to get involved with the externals of the scripture that we forget there's more to it. Externals are meant to move the inside a recent example during the Memorial Day parade when the family and I were watching the parade and those two F sixteens flew overhead to see them flying so low to hear the mighty roar and to actually rumble inside as they passed. All those externals came together in me and I had a sense of much appreciation for all those who sacrificed so much to allow me to live in the land of freedom.

In the first reading today from the acts the apostles it's very easy to be amazed at the external signs-that are there, there's a noise like a strong wind and in the Old Testament the wind was a sign of the presence of God. We read about tongues of flame that appear above the heads of each of those gathered there. In the Old Testament fire was a symbol of the Torah the law and then those people gathered in that room begin to speak in different tongues and the crowd outside is so amazed that all of this is happening. They're impressed they see the external signs, they hear everything and it amazes them.

Now the acts of the apostles actually ends a little short today in my opinion because there's more that gives us a profound insight into what I'm talking about. It continues with Peter explaining to the crowd who Jesus was and describe the many external signs that proved he was the son of God. He talks about the father the son the Holy Spirit, he talks about the miracles, the resurrection of Jesus and all of that. Then in chapter 2 verse 37 we read “they were cut to the heart.” They had taken all those externals, had put it all together and they were moved. Something inside of them changed, had moved them to where 3000 were baptized on that day. The externals did what they were meant to do - the externals brought about an internal change in their lives.

You see the work of the Holy Spirit is not in what we see or imagine, in what we hear or what we experience but the work of the spirit is what it does in inside. It transforms us to be God's child, to have what I like to call the aha moment where everything we've seen and heard and tasted and smelled and felt and experienced all comes together and it all makes sense to us. We come to realize that simply belonging to a church and calling ourselves Christian-while it's good-it's not good enough. We have to take all of that externalness, put it inside of us and go out there in the world a changed a transformed person.

This feast of Pentecost was very important to our Jewish ancestors. It was the feast that commemorated the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. It was their tradition that it took them 49 days to get from Egypt to Mount Sinai-49 days of reflecting, of experiencing hardships and then on that 50th day they're made clean and ready to accept a new law, to enter into a new land, new home, a new way of life.

In today's acts of the apostles it's been 49 days since Jesus was risen from the dead and these apostles and disciples of Jesus have had time to reflect on all the external signs they seen. They've heard stories of how he has appeared to more and more throughout these 40 days they reflect on the miracles they themselves witnessed in their hearing. It changes their lives with the coming of the spirit - it all makes sense what he was preaching about.

So Pentecost is not just about those beautiful signs, it's about the beautiful transformation inside us. I love the fact that the Holy Spirit does not come to each one individually at different times in different places; they're gathered together in the upper room and they're scared. They're frightened, they're hiding, they're afraid to admit that they're a follower of Christ and yet after all those external signs it’s the spirit that comes upon them and they have the aha moment. They go out in their community now proud to proclaim that they're a follower of Christ.

Look at us here, gathered in a room today and probably many of us are frightened. We're scared, we're hiding, we're afraid to go out there and admit that we're his follower. But if we take all the externals we've experienced-the beauty of Easter, the words we've heard, those hymns we've sung, the words we've heard from the homilies and if we put that all together the spirit will come upon us together just as it did all those years ago to the disciples and we will no longer be afraid to go out there and proclaim we are his follower.

Remember how I said there's “you can't judge a book by its cover”? As far as I can tell there's only one book that I would depend on, a book that no matter what the cover looks like I know the inside has the ability to change. It's that book that I like to call the basic instructions before leaving earth or the Bible and if we open our hearts and open our minds and open our ears and let the spirit come upon us, we will have that aha moment where it all makes sense and we can go out there and transform the world