

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ: Christ is among us!

For farmers and anyone who plants a garden at home, we all know that those delicious vegetables or flowers we enjoy come from a seed. Some smaller than the head of a pin. God created that tiny, tiny seed with everything it needs to bring forth life. Genes and DNA are such in that seed that it contains within it all the possibility of a seedling, a full grown plant, flower and fruit. But the seed is dormant, in a way, asleep, not able to realize the fullness of its potential on its own. The seed needs fertile earth. It needs light to germinate and the heat of the sun to burst forth as a small seedling that doesn't look like it can become much of anything. But with plenty of water and careful weeding, removal of pests and treatments for disease, that plant grows and flourishes. Eventually it puts forth buds that open so that bees can pollinate them and those flower petals fall to reveal the fruit that begins to grow. And with much patience and labor, that little seed has gone from a tiny speck to a full grown plant filled with fruit that itself is filled with seed, with the potential for new life.

In a certain way, each of us is like a seed. Our heavenly Father has fashioned and formed us so that from the moment of our conception, everything needed for our physical development, from heart, to lungs to brain is present within us. Physically we need the time in our mother's womb to develop to the point where we are born into the world, able to breathe and live as individuals. Great care is given to us as we grow up or grew up, the shelter of a home, the nourishment of good food, the fellowship of our family and friends which helps form us into the persons we are and are becoming every day.

Yet we are more than only our body. We are spirits who have been en fleshed. God has breathed into us life and created us with a special place for Himself not outside of us but within us, in the depths of our heart. We fulfill God's plan for us, we become what He hopes we will be, through the Holy Spirit whose descent upon the Holy Disciples and Apostles we celebrate on this day. It is the Holy Spirit alive in us Who allows us to grow according to God's plan for us. The Spirit of God is the flowing water, the light and the heat that transforms us from being seeds, mere children of nature, to become children of God, each of us sons and daughters of our heavenly Father and therefore spiritual brothers and sisters to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The day of Pentecost for each of us is the day of our baptism when we entered the temple bearing the spark of the divine image within us yet only as children of the earth. When we were washed in the blessed water and anointed with the Holy Chrism we were given a new life, a life beyond this world, where the kingdom of God dwells within us and the Spirit of God Himself took each of us as His Temple, set apart for Him to fill us, to guide us and lead us to the fullness of life.

For us to grow in the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit to dwell ever more deeply in us asks something of us. As our gardens need us to water and weed and care, our life in the Holy Spirit is one of turning away from sin, holding our tongue instead of cutting with sharp words, praying for someone enslaved to sin rather than judging them, and listening to the person who is in pain rather than avoiding them. These are only a very few of the ways we open ourselves more deeply to the Holy Spirit within us. These are the fruits of the Spirit at work in us. The Holy Spirit is given to us as a gift that we may bear fruit, that we may have life and life to the full. Let us invite the Spirit of God ever more deeply into our lives through our acts of forgiveness, of compassion, of mercy and of love, by our prayer, our fasting and almsgiving that we may share the fullness of life in God with those around us, both near and far, that the communion with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit we enjoy here on earth may be perfected in its fullness in the age to come.