



We have all heard this story of the Tower of Babel, but there is a deeper meaning to this story that connects to this feast of Pentecost. The people in the story of the Tower of Babel are attempting to build a tower all the way to heaven. Their thought is that if they can build a tower that reaches to heaven, then, with weapons in hand, they can storm heaven and take over. In other words, they want to become the gods. Sound familiar? It's the same thing that Satan tempted Adam and Eve with.

Then, as the story goes, God scatters their language so that they cannot cooperate to build the tower. What is the theological truth of this story? The truth being communicated here is that human pride causes division, causes the splintering of the human community. The scattering of the language is the symbol of that division.

Now let's turn to the story of Pentecost. Notice what is the main feature or the main thing that characterizes the effect of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is that all heard the Apostles preaching **IN THE SAME LANGUAGE**. In other words, where pride splinters the human community (as in the Babel story), the Holy Spirit brings unity, heals the division among humans, and this is symbolized by the unity of their language. The Holy Spirit brings the unity of the Church.

We hear a cultural creed in our society, especially maybe in universities and some corporations – diversity, diversity, diversity! On the one hand, this is a good thing if it means the acceptance of others and their individual gifts and who they are as unique individuals. On the other hand, in many parts of our society, this has gone too far. The meaning of this slogan has become merely an excuse for vice, for evil.

Pope Benedict called this the “dictatorship of relativism.” Relativism here means that we all have our own truth. Relativism means that we can all believe what we want about God, about sexuality, about human life. This is the New Babel in our society. It is an expression of human pride rooted in our fallen nature, and it causes division.

The Holy Spirit of God, rather, brings unity – unity of belief. Why is it so important that we Catholics believe the same thing? Because there is only one truth which God has revealed to us in Jesus through the Church. Truth flourishes in unity which is a gift of the Spirit.

And unity in truth leads to unity in love. Isn't that what the Trinity is? Perfect love in unity. The Father gives Himself completely to the Son. The Son receives the gift of the

Father and returns Himself completely. And this exchange of life and love between Father and Son is so real, that it itself is another person, the Holy Spirit.

And this is the gift that God pours out upon us, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the very life and love of the Father and the Son. We receive this gift at our baptism. It is renewed and poured anew at our Confirmation. The Spirit is continually poured upon us in prayer. We experience the power of the Spirit when we hear the Word of God, and there are many varied and wonderful ways that the Spirit comes upon us, leading us deeper into the mystery of love which is the Trinity.

Human pride fractures the human community. The Holy Spirit of God poured upon us heals us – bringing us unity in the Church, unity in truth and love.

**Father Mark Gurtner at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana
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