

# Pentecost renews heart of our community

*Our generosity to others is a selfless act of love*

Since last Pentecost Sunday, how would you describe your gift of service to your community? It is an appropriate question for all of us this weekend (May 22-23) as we celebrate the popular feast of Pentecost Sunday, a feast we usually associate with the call to serve as people baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Just before Holy Week, *The Catholic Register* carried a special feature with the title “Heeding the call to service.” The section offered inspiring stories of different ways in which some men and women have answered the call to serve: a dancer who has nurtured her new gift in communications to spread the Gospel; a sports enthusiast who through his foundation provides sport facilities for poor children; and a family who is leading a campaign for equity and accessibility and inclusion of hearing impaired students in schools and other places. There were also stories of some seminarians and women receiving their formation to serve in the archdiocese as priests, deacons and nuns.

These individuals’ gifts of



On Pentecost, we celebrate the birth of the Church but also the gift of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to be servants to others. (Register file photo)

service are different but the source of strength of their gifts of service is the same — the Holy Spirit.

On Pentecost Sunday we traditionally celebrate the birth of

the Church and also the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live as servants through our acts of service. In fact, the Mass readings

since Easter Sunday have focused on the Holy Spirit’s activity in the lives of the early disciples. The Holy Spirit guided and empowered the early disciples to build loving communities in which “awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles” (Acts 2).

On Pentecost Sunday we recognize that God has given each of us the gift for the “manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12). The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World of the Second Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope), teaches that “Man redeemed by Christ and made a new creation in the Holy Spirit, can and must love the very things created by God. For he receives them from God, and sees and reveres them as coming from the hand of God. As he gives thanks for them to his Benefactor, and uses and enjoys them in a spirit of poverty and freedom, he enters into true possession of the world, as one having nothing and possessing all things” (37).

This document reminds us of the diversity of gifts from God and that it is how we use these gifts that identifies us as people “made a new creation in the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor. 5).

So, on this Pentecost Sunday, there are some questions we can reflect on. How are we allowing



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ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit in our own lives? How do we experience the working of the Holy Spirit in our communities of faith?

Every year the celebration of Pentecost Sunday offers us a challenge for self-reflection: to look into our hearts and judge the generosity of our service to people around us. This year, let us use the opportunity to re-examine the many ways in which we can serve. Giving of ourselves for the sake of others challenges us to look beyond the ways we are accustomed to doing things.

The stories of service featured in *The Catholic Register* serve as examples of the many different ways in which we may learn new gifts of service. We can find similar situations in our parishes: a parishioner who has learned to manage his time to enable him help in the youth ministry, a new lector who has learned how to read in front of a congregation and a parishioner with a new desire to reach out to a needy family in the community. Our generosity to others is our selfless act of love for others.

In this year’s ShareLife campaign message for Pentecost Sunday, Cardinal Thomas Collins writes: “ShareLife is the way the rubber hits the road. This is how we validate the legitimacy and integrity of our Christian life: not by the words we speak, but by the love we share in practical ways. That’s what we do with ShareLife.”

Every year, through our sharing of our gifts with others, we bring them hope. Our acts of love can be the expression of our response to God’s love, the love revealed in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Our different gifts of service to others bring us closer to God and to each other and create loving communities.

As we come to the end of the Easter season, let us ask God to kindle the fire of His Spirit in our hearts so we can live as one joyful people united in and inspired by one Spirit.

(Fr. Acheampong is pastor at Our Lady of Peace Parish in Toronto.)

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