



WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

Do you remember the story of the Tower of Babel? It comes from Genesis, chapter 11. It begins: “The whole world had the same language and the same words”. People decided to build a city and a tower to make a name for themselves. God sees what they are doing, and decides that if they continue in the same way, “nothing they presume to do will be out of their reach.” In response, God confused their language “so that no one will understand the speech of another.”

A simplistic and superficial reading of the story sees it as only a fable of how the world developed multiple languages. On a deeper level, and the spiritual point of the story, is the damage caused by human pride (which was first manifested in the Garden of Eden and disobedience of eating of the apple). To further expand this lesson, we can also recognize that the concept of “language” is more than just words. By that I mean, that we can describe language as one’s world view. When there is a clash of values and outlook on life it can be like speaking a different language. Thus, there can be failure in communication leading to division and even a lack of cooperation, even though people speak the same actual language or dialect. Their values or worldviews conflict. At the simplest level, this can be that one person is neat and organized and one is not; one is talkative and one is quiet; one is intellectual and another is emotional. At the more explosive level, one is conservative and one is liberal, either politically or in terms of religion. Look out!

It's easy to acknowledge this division, literally when people speak two different languages, but also societally, when they have completely opposed views. We see it all the time these days. This can be discussed interminably without resolution.

Good news! Today, we celebrate the great, yes, great, feast of Pentecost. We remember the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles to embolden them and to give birth to the Church. Part of that manifestation was reversal, and even, elimination of the division of Babel! Remember the story. Despite the diverse backgrounds and languages, everyone understood the preaching of the Apostles. They were united around the Good News of the Gospel. “We hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.’ They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, ‘What does this mean?’”

Our hope is in the proclamation of and living out of the Kingdom. It is the Holy Spirit that can lead us to the unity that Jesus taught and desires. This is sometimes modeled at the end of a sporting event. Have you seen players from both teams, who just did their best to beat the other, keeling down, together in prayer? It can happen, and the Church should be the catalyst. Rather than endless arguing, yelling, screaming, anger, and even violence, the Holy Spirit offers another way. Perhaps we could try it!

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)