Pentecôte 2014

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ils étaient tous ensemble au même (lieu) » (Acts 2 :1)

In our day, it is very common to hear the opinion voiced : « I am a very spiritual person, but have no need of religion. » Or : « I pray all the time, and don’t need to go to church. » Or even : « I am a good Catholic, but don’t attend Mass every Sunday. » In the pop-psychology of the 1960s and 70s, it was taken as self-evident that « the Spirit blows where It wills » -- which was interpreted as « Do whatever you want. » Appeals are often made to « the practice of the Early Church », which is supposed to have been somehow freer, more spontaneous, less « rules-oriented », more « open to the Spirit. »

But is this really the case? St. Luke’s account of the Day of Pentecost paints rather a different picture : « Comme le jour de la Pentecôte était arrivé, ils étaient tous ensemble au même (lieu) » (Acts 2 :1). In the first place, we notice the first Disciples were following a Liturgical Calendar—the calendar they had received from Holy Father Moses, an ancient and most venerable tradition. The Day of Pentecost was originally a harvest feast, but was transformed over the centuries into a feast of thanksgiving for having received the Torah, the Law of Moses. It is fitting to recall that Our Lord Himself told the Apostles : « Ne pensez pas que je sois venu abolir la Loi ou les Prophètes; je ne suis pas venu abolir, mais parfaire » (Matt. 5 :17). In reality, Law and Spirit are not opposed, but mutually dependent. Law separated from the Spirit becomes a dead letter, and truly kills Christian joy. On the other hand, a supposedly « free spirit » uninformed by the Ten Commandments makes itself a slave to sin, and defaces the Image of God in the soul of the human person.

In the second place, we notice that the disciples were «  tous ensemble au   
même (lieu) » when they received the Holy Ghost. What does this teach us? It teaches us that in the Divine Economy, the fullness of the Spirit of God is entrusted only to the Church. It is of course true, as the Second Vatican Council taught, that « elements of sanctification exist outside » the visible structures of the Church -- for example, the valid baptism of non-Catholics – but wherever these elements exists, we know they have their source in God, communicated to men on earth through the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. We have only to read a few chapters further in Acts 8 to find the stern condemnation of Simon Magus by St. Peter. What was his crime? He wished to receive the grace of God directly, immediately, apart from the Body of Christ—but this is impossible! There is only One Way back to God, the Father of All—and that is through His Son, Jesus Christ, in communion with the Holy Spirit—to Whom be all honor and glory, now and forever, Amen!