

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

05/27/12 PENTECOST B

-- Have you ever had the wind knocked out of you? It's a scary feeling to be gasping for air, out of breath and to only slowly recover the ability to breathe normally.

-- I would imagine the followers of Jesus felt like they had the wind knocked out of them when he died on the cross. Even when some saw him alive again they weren't sure at first what to think.

-- Then the gift of the Holy Spirit came to them. The gospel speaks of Jesus breathing it into the apostles on the very night of his resurrection. Our first reading shows the gift coming as a mighty wind several weeks later on the Jewish feast of Pentecost to about 120 of Jesus' disciples.

-- In any case, it was a "second wind" for them. They could breathe again, and they were able to go out and do his work.

-- I could say a lot of things about the work of the Holy Spirit. I could talk about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as we do with our young people preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

-- Today, though, I'd rather give three examples of people who showed us the work of the Holy Spirit. Two are women and one is a man. Two come from several centuries ago and one from most of our lifetimes. But they speak to us today in different but contemporary ways.

-- The first is St. Rita of Cascia, whose feast was last Tuesday. As a young woman, Rita married and had two sons. Her husband was a violent man, a type of mafia don of the 14th century. There's also good evidence that he abused her.

-- He was murdered, but she refused to seek revenge against his murderers, not because of his abuse but because of her spirit of forgiveness. Eventually she entered a religious order and spent the rest of her life serving the poor, underprivileged and those abused in her day.

-- She is an example of the Spirit's power to help us survive extreme difficulty. She's also someone whom abused women of our own day can pray to for God's help.

-- The second is St. Thomas More of England. He rose to the position of Chancellor to King Henry VIII. But, when Henry passed the Act of Supremacy, declaring himself head of the Church, Thomas More could not, in good conscience, sign it. Henry pleaded with him since he liked him personally. But this was treason, and Thomas More was finally beheaded.

-- He speaks to the virtue of courage for public officials in the face of power which oversteps its boundaries. That courage is needed today. He also models civility, because he respected the consciences of those around him who did sign the act. He did not immediately condemn them in a spirit of self-righteousness. We could use more people like him.

-- The last is Blessed Chiara Luce Badano. She was an Italian teenager who died of cancer at 19 in 1990. She was a vibrant, pretty and faith-filled girl who was in many ways a normal teenager.* But in her two year battle with cancer, the treatments and all the pain, she showed a gentle and truly happy spirit to all around her.

-- It was appropriate that her beatification ceremony took place just before the World Youth Day celebration last year. She is an example to young people everywhere that faith is not just for older people. She demonstrated genuine love in suffering, and even joy in her sorrow.

-- These three are examples of what the Holy Spirit can do in real people. They were given the breath of God. And so are we, not only in Baptism and Confirmation, but in our everyday efforts to believe, through receiving the Eucharist and in our prayers for strength for the daily challenges of life.

-- So, when we feel like we've had the spiritual wind knocked out of us, let's think of these people and others who have overcome difficulties and have kept the faith. The Holy Spirit *is* there to give us a second wind.

*e.g., Negotiating curfew times with her parents