

Last Saturday I attended the Ascend Eucharistic Revival at the Meydenbauer Center. At 2:00 PM came a highlight of the day, the Eucharistic Procession. There were about 3,000 Catholics there and after a period of Eucharistic adoration in the main hall we all formed up and headed out onto the streets of downtown Bellevue. In the lead were Knights of Columbus with banners and on the shoulders of four of them a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Next came about 30 altar servers, then a dozen nuns in habit, a dozen vested deacons, 20 priests, Bishop Schuster in his purple choir vestments. Then came Fr. Wichert in cope and humeral veil carrying the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance, under a canopy carried by four seminarians, all in cassock and surplice, with another three with thuribles – incensing. I had the privilege of walking right behind Fr. Wichert in my own humeral veil, ready to assist in carrying the Blessed Sacrament if/when it became too heavy. Right behind us came an acapella choir, signing classic Eucharistic hymns. And behind the choir thousands of devout Catholics, filling the streets as

we went. As it turned out, I had the pleasure of carrying the monstrance for about a third of the procession, and I remember looking back at the throng of laypeople following, and being moved by the vision of God's Church in motion – alive.

Today is Pentecost – the birthday of the Church. I mention my experience of the Eucharistic Procession because that afternoon I felt like we were a microcosm of the universal Catholic Church, arrayed in all her numbers and hierarchical splendor and color. You should have seen the eyes of people in their cars driving by or on the streets, asking, “What in the world are you all doing?” We were going out into the world to proclaim the presence of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. That is the mission of the Church. Or, to paraphrase St. Paul VI, it's not the Church that has a mission. Rather, the Mission of proclaiming the Gospel has a Church formed by God to carry it out.

On this Pentecost, two thoughts come to me about the Church and that procession: first, the Kingdom of God and its Church is

inconvenient and incomprehensible to the World. We didn't process all that far. From the Convention Center we went onto NE 8th, past all the fancy shops. Then we headed south over to NE 4th and looped back to the Convention Center, maybe 45 minutes altogether. But we didn't walk on the sidewalk. The police had blocked off a lane on all the streets we used – and this on a busy Saturday afternoon. This meant that the flow of cars going into and out of Bellevue was congested. We did cause traffic backups. Some honking ensued -- some perhaps in support -- probably more wanting us to get a-move-on.

I thought that was a good symbol of the reaction of the World to Christ. He disrupts the World. Therefore, it's no accident that the people and elites and ideologies of the world should be frustrated and angry with the Disciples of Christ. There is bound to be friction between the Kingdom of God and the Rulers of this world. We

shouldn't be surprised – or intimidated by those looks and honking horns.

Why? Because the Holy Spirit calls us to be there! That procession was a puncturing of the cultural bubble in which our society wants to keep us Catholics. The World will grudgingly permit us, at least for now, to go about our business if we keep it all within the walls of the churches. But if we dare to poke our heads out into their world, watch out! And yet that is what we're meant to do.

On this Pentecost we should remember that we have the graces of the Holy Spirit – if we will only use them – to bring Jesus' healing to a world in desperate need of it, but largely ignorant even of its possibility. If we struggle taking that message into our personal circle, then we need to pray for the Spirit to warm our hearts to the mission. So many do not know or believe that they are so loved by the Creator of the universe that He died for them. That they are that loveable and forgivable. That is why we pray the parish prayer every

mass. “Heavenly Father, please send your Holy Spirit upon our parish community, to help each of us take our next step in following Jesus, and to help us live and share the joy of the Gospel with others.”

But I understand how difficult delivering that message can seem. If those of us in that procession were asked to carry a Christian sign down NE 8th by ourselves – most of us would hesitate. It is so much easier to witness together. And that is how it is supposed to be!

Pentecost did not happen to individuals in their own homes. The Holy Spirit fell on the Apostles when they were gathered together. Catholic Christianity is not a solitary exercise. That is one problem with the idea that We can be spiritual but not religious. Our faith grows in community. I felt that strength as we processed through Bellevue. Carrying Jesus in the monstrance and looking behind me at the thousands following Him, I drew strength from

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, but also from Jesus in the members of the Body of Christ, the faithful.

On this Pentecost, the Birthday of the Church, let us remember, that our Catholic faith is not meant to be hidden or solitary. I tell everyone in the OCIA as they enter the Church, “Join up! Become an active member – find your ministry or group. Connect.” And I say to all of us life-long Catholics, if we are not contributing our time and talents to the Church we are missing out on God’s grace for our own spiritual lives. But, just as important, the people of the World are missing out on the Good News of Christ that the Holy Spirit has equipped and sent us to proclaim.