

**Archdiocesan Pastoral Council Mass
June 8, 2019**

“There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written.”

My brothers and sisters, these are the final words from St. John’s Gospel before we celebrate the Vigil of Pentecost this very evening. It is important, I think, that we take a moment and realize where we are, not only in respect to the Sacred Liturgy of the Church, but also as a Church living in history and empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue the great work of Our Lord. As a Pastoral Council, taking note of where we are is of paramount importance.

Going all the way back to the celebration of Christmas, we recalled that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity entered into our humanity, our history as human beings, in the flesh. This is the mystery of the Incarnation. Last week we celebrated the Ascension of the Lord when the same Christ Jesus, now glorified in his resurrection, took our human nature with him to the right hand of the Father, that we may be glorified! And now, we are about to celebrate the birthday of the Church when the Father and the Son sent the powerful breath of God, which we call the Holy Spirit, to give life to the Church being born. We are meant to remember that God first breathed life into us at the moment of creation when he gathered the clay of the earth. Forming that clay into Adam and Eve, God “breathed” life into us, animating us, filling us with the energy of

being alive! Now, through the outpouring of not merely air, but of His own Spirit, God “breathes” the Church into life, and he “breathes” in the world through us!

Throughout this Easter Season we have been reading from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, written by St. Luke. We have witnessed, throughout the Book of Acts, that the Holy Spirit acts powerfully, lavishly, and openly among God’s holy people. And as we have followed the development of the early Church in Jerusalem, and throughout the Mediterranean region with the preaching of Sts. Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and others, we have seen a church ever growing in both maturity and danger! We have rejoiced as through the preaching of Peter thousands were baptized, and through the preaching of Paul many Gentiles entered the faith. But we have also seen that there were wolves ready to distort the faith, or to disconnect moral conduct from the call of faith. So profound were the tensions of the early Church that a Council was called in Jerusalem to resolve them! The Church decided that Gentiles could be in the church without becoming Jews first, but also decided that there were some moral basics that had to be followed, like not falling into idolatry or engaging in unlawful marriages or sexual activity.

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles tells us about those first decades of the life of the Church, a Church driven in the power of the Holy Spirit. But I submit that the Acts of the Apostles is not finished! The same Spirit that guided Peter and Paul guides the Church today!

Like the early Church we see marvels as millions become new Christians every year! We engage in better and more effective charity and care for the poor than ever! And yet, like the early Church, we contend with the failures of some of our members, some of our clergy, and the confusion engendered by those who oppose the Church's truest teachings.

You, my brothers and sisters, as an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, are one of the ways the Holy Spirit speaks to and guides the Church today, along with me and Bishop Mike who carry the Apostolic tradition, and the priests and deacons, who are our chief collaborators. We share in the feelings of disappointment when part of the Body of Christ seems to fail us, and we rejoice together with a holy pride at the generosity, holiness, and goodness of what God accomplishes through us! As we prepare to meet today and to celebrate Pentecost tonight, let us ask that God "breathe" in us and through us, that new life in the Holy Spirit may be engendered in our Church. Let us, like the early Church, be humble enough to acknowledge our shortcomings and failures, and at the same time be docile to the Holy Spirit who works through that very humility to bring the many to salvation.