

Pentecost A June 12, 2011 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

This past month I saw the film, *Of Gods and Men*, a French film about a community of 8 Trappist monks in a monastery in Algeria, northern Africa. It is a true story that takes place during the 1990's when civil war broke out in that country. The monks had lived for many years in a Moslem village, befriending them and providing medical care for them. When the civil war broke out they were advised by almost everyone to get out of the country, but the abbot said they would not leave. Some of the monks objected to him making that decision on his own, saying that it should be a decision made by the whole community. The movie is a beautiful portrayal of them slowly coming to a decision. Throughout the film you see different monks relating to the villagers, and struggling with their own decision, and frequently interspersed where the monks singing the divine office or celebrating mass in their chapel. Finally they come to their decision, and are given the strength to live with the consequence of that decision.

Why do I mention this movie on Pentecost Sunday? I saw the spirit of God present in those monks. I saw the spirit in the abbot when he backed away from making an arbitrary decision for everyone. I saw the spirit in the monks as they ministered to the Moslems in the village. I saw the spirit especially as each monks discerned God's will, and when they came to chapel for prayer. The movie was about the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in our world.

The Holy Spirit has always been present. We see it in the scriptures. The Spirit was present in Moses and the prophets and many characters in the Old Testament. The presence of the Spirit is more obvious in the New Testament, especially in Jesus. The spirit was present when Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary, and at his baptism when the heavens were opened. The spirit was present in Jesus as he taught and ministered to the people of his day. Ever since Easter Sunday Jesus has been talking about the spirit in the gospel of John. And we have been reading exclusively from the Acts of the Apostles and we see the spirit so alive in the early church and in its leaders Peter and Paul.

We see that especially in our readings today. In our first reading the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and they fearlessly go out and preach about Jesus and all the people are able to understand them and come to believe. The gospel is the same gospel that was read the Sunday after Easter, when Jesus breathed on the apostles and gave them the spirit.

Jesus continues to give us that same spirit. I see it all the time. I saw it on Thursday, in the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains, as Fr. Joseph Binzer was ordained the auxiliary bishop of Cincinnati. He is a very well respected and loved man who is led by the spirit. I see the Holy Spirit present in so many ways here at St. Charles parish. I see him present and working through the staff of this parish. I see him in our ministers, whether they be taking communion to the homebound, ministering to the needy, teaching the faith. I see him present in our first communicants and those being confirmed. I see the spirit present here every day when we gather, as those monks did, to sing the praise of God and celebrate the Eucharist.

It is Pentecost Sunday. It is a time to give thanks to God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and a time to pray that we might be more fully aware of his presence in our lives.