

**June 4, 2017 Pentecost Homily:** If you listen to the broadcast of a baseball game, you'll likely hear the play-by-play announcer make frequent use of metaphors in describing the play on the field. Some of the more common ones are "red hot", "on fire", "hot streak" and "smoking". By using these popular figures of speech, the announcer is, in effect, saying that the ball player is performing at a very high level and is making a significant difference to the outcome of the game. If, on the other hand, a player is "ice cold", it usually means that he is in a prolonged batting slump and is hurting the chances of the team for a win.

Fifty days after Easter Christians around the world celebrate and re-live the mystery of Pentecost, (a Greek word meaning fiftieth) the fulfillment of the paschal mystery and the end of the Easter cycle of the liturgical year. On this feast, the Church commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit, one of the glorious mysteries of our faith. It is worth noting that the Holy Spirit is depicted under the image of fire. In the Acts of the Apostles we read, "Then appeared to them what seemed to be tongues of fire which parted and rested on them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit". (Acts 2:3) The Father's promise... announced by Jesus... is fulfilled. "Before many days, you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you". (Acts 1:5,8) And let us recall the words of the Baptist: "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire". (Lk.3:6) In the Old Testament, the tongues of fire are an allusion to the coming of God's Spirit upon Moses and the elders of the chosen people. As members of the Christian faithful, we celebrate the fire of Jesus' love that the Holy Spirit spread to the church, so that she can teach the entire world, a fire that will never be extinguished!

On Easter Sunday, the disciples were "ice cold". Two days earlier, on the day of Our Lord's crucifixion, they failed to distinguish themselves by deserting their Master. On the evening of Our Lord's resurrection, the author of the fourth gospel informs us that they "were behind locked doors for fear of the Jews" (Jn.20:19), a vivid and telling profile of human cowardice. But upon receiving the gift of the Spirit, their lives underwent a dramatic and admittedly, curious transformation. Suddenly, they were on fire with the Spirit and boldly and courageously proclaiming the crucified Christ as risen from the dead." As a baseball announcer might say, "They were smoking hot"!

Professor Peter Kreeft, a devout Catholic and author of many books, writes that the Holy Spirit is the power source of the Christian faithful. Jesus is like the electricity in the wires and the Father is the dynamo that generates the electricity. He strongly recommends that we plug into the power.

In nineteenth century England, a particular genre of story was very popular with renowned novelists: ghost stories. In the age of awesome scientific achievements and religious skepticism, there was a genuine fear that the supernatural would be forgotten or, worse, rejected. The English writers of ghost stories wanted their readers to know that all of reality cannot be quantified or measured. Ghost stories kept in the view of the reader the real, though, invisible, mysteries of life.

The coming of the Holy Spirit is not a one time historical event. At a time when too many Christians are adrift and walking aimlessly through life, we need to plug into that power source, which is the Holy Spirit, today.

Together let us reaffirm our faith by uttering the words of the Apostle's creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life".

Amen!