



## **January 7, 2018 - And They Spoke In Tongues**

(Acts 19:7)

**Given by Rev. Mattei**

Today's Gospel reading is about two kinds of baptism: baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit. John the Baptist announces that he baptizes with water, but the one coming after him (Jesus) will baptize with the Spirit. For Christians, the two become one. Spirit, Word, and Water mingle as the pastor proclaims: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." In this moment, the one baptized is blessed with water and the Spirit, and promised that the Spirit will remain with her or him forever.

In the Gospel of Mark (1:4) we read that "John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance... And people from the whole [...] countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." People willingly made the trip into the dangerous wilderness longing for cleansing and a new start in life. They confessed and repented. (To repent means to be turned around to face a new future.) With water and the Word, using John the Baptist, God forgave them and gave them a new direction for their lives.

We were all baptized in the one baptism of the Lord. However, the Gospels do not report any baptism done by Jesus. At least not any baptism that could be associated in shape and form to the one performed by John. We may assume that the water gushing out from Jesus' wounded side on the cross was for a possible baptism of his disciples. Some theologians identify that moment as the birth of the Church out of the broken waters of Jesus. Some other theologians identify the baptism of the disciples and therefore the birth of the Church with the event of Pentecost. In that occasion Jesus gave his Spirit to fearful disciples hidden and locked in the upper room. Soon after the disciples were heard speaking in tongues. The Church interpreted that as a sign of the

presence of the Spirit in them.<sup>1</sup> However, Paul made it clear: The speaking in tongues should not create confusion or consternation but should be done for the building of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

The Good News of Jesus in content and form is the mother tongue of Christians. Are we aware of what kind of language we as disciples are speaking to others? Is it Christian and is it comprehensible? Are we timid and feeling insecure in speaking the Christian language? We all know that in order to speak a language well we need to be completely immersed in the culture. We have plunged ourselves in the Christian culture when we took the baptismal bath. Through the Spirit and as adopted children we are made participants of the intimate love conversation that the Father and the Son speak to each other. Furthermore, through the Incarnation the whole creation is in on that love fest. Listening to the Spirit we are instructed in the grammar and syntax of God's love language. At the school of the Word we slowly learn how to compose simple phrases and then more complex paragraphs that people can understand and learn from. With time and practice through study, prayer and generous service we may become hope letters to the world.<sup>3</sup>

On the occasion of Feast of the baptism of our Lord and with the renewal of our baptismal vows let us pick up the study of that spiritual language and work towards mastering it.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:4; 19:6; Mark 16:17;

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:1-5.23

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:2-3