

Some terms used in the stock market are great for describing Pentecost. Pentecost is the Church going public. It's the IPO, the initial public offering of the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. The citizens of Jerusalem and the pilgrims there from throughout the Roman Empire that day, are offered shares in eternal life. And everyone hears the offer in their own language.

Today's First Reading stops right before those speeches. (Why do they do that?) Well 3,000 people are baptized that day because they hear Good News: that our lives don't have to end the way they are now. We're not prisoners of our circumstances and limitations – not stuck in poverty or bound by illness or prejudice or whatever; because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and every person who believes Jesus can do the same for them, will also have eternal life.

In the First Reading the Holy Spirit is sent to Jesus's disciples because they're still afraid to spread this Good News. The first thing the Holy Spirit does is conquer their fears: strengthens them so they can go out and take the Church public, and bear witness to the Good News about the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and then the Holy Spirit gives them the gifts they need to continue Jesus's mission.

When Jesus's time on earth was up, His work was not finished. So our mission is to continue it, to bring God's love to the world, and build up the Kingdom of God here, by using our gifts to fight against the evil power of sin in the world, as it enters into our personal lives.

Fear is the foundation of so much sin. Fear stops us from doing good and being good.

One of my fear experiences happened when I lived in San Francisco. I was at the Embarcadero and went to the elevator that takes you down to the subway. Like usual, nobody else was around. I step in and push the button, the doors are closing, and at the last second two different black hands appear and pry open the doors.

Two big black men step into the elevator, and I'm thinking: I'm going to get mugged. I was scared. I was alone. My heart was pounding. But did I get mugged? No! They just wanted to get down to the subway like I did.

My fear was racist. I presumed they had evil intentions; I judged them as evil because they were big and black. If it had been two big white guys coming on that elevator, I wouldn't have expected to get mugged. Only after that incident did I realize I still had some racist fears to overcome. I had never thought of myself before as racist, but then I realized there are still some smoldering embers deep down in me, some stuff to work on.

Surely all of you saw on TV this week the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. It's ostensibly about injustice, but let this event provoke us to look at the fears that underly racism, and the other fears in our own lives, and with God's grace overcome them — because this is not the end; we have a future with Christ; and He personally loves us and is always with us in His Spirit to take care of our needs.

When we were baptized, we received the same Holy Spirit that the disciples received on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit's first job was to drive out their fear. And the Holy Spirit of Christ will do that for you and me if we ask. Let's take our worries and concerns and pray for the Holy Spirit to release us from our fears: fear of certain people, fear of continuing Jesus's mission, fear of what people might think about us, fear of taking chances to do good.

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