

# **‘Dear friends’ – Bishop Vincent’s Homily from 20 May 2018**

Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost in Year B 2018 at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Parramatta, 20 May 2018



**Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv DD STL, Bishop of Parramatta**  
**Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost in Year B 2018 at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Parramatta**  
*20 May 2018*

Dear friends,

What an amazing transformation of the disciples of Jesus! We cannot help but marvel at the radical change the Holy Spirit accomplished in them at Pentecost. They, by all accounts, were not a bunch of brilliant people. They were ordinary, unremarkable and disparate individuals. That’s not all. They never really understood nor cared about the vision of Jesus. They followed him out of their own agendas, ambitions and interests. At the critical hour, they showed their true colours. They failed the test of discipleship. At least the male disciples did anyway. They all abandoned Jesus in order to save themselves. It was their human nature at its worst.

Then, as they gathered in that upper room on Pentecost Sunday, the unexpected happened. They were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Everything about them: their outlook on life, their attitudes, their behaviour changed fundamentally. They came to understand who Jesus truly was and what it meant to be his disciple. From then on, they began to live with a passion for the Kingdom and to enliven the world with the values of the Gospel.

God knows we need a fusion of the Holy Spirit into the Catholic Church at this critical time. Only yesterday, every bishop in Chile offered his resignation to Pope Francis after a three-day meeting at the Vatican to discuss the clerical sexual abuse scandal. This is totally unprecedented, and it shows the depth of the crisis in the church. The Pope, acting boldly at last on this issue,

acknowledged that it would be irresponsible not to go deep in looking for the roots and structures that allowed these evil acts to happen and to go on.

Here in Australia, thanks to the Royal Commission, we know that it is not a matter of a few bad apples in the barrel. The crisis we face in the church is deep seated, perhaps not unlike the financial institutions whose culture of corruption and self-interest has been exposed. Indeed, it is not only the case of a few bad apples. It is more like the apple that is sick at its core. We leaders have drifted from Jesus' vision of humble service, inclusive love and solidarity. Instead of demonstrating that fundamental ethos of care for those who have been harmed, we have been shown to care primarily for the church's own security, reputation and interests at the expense of the vulnerable.

Whether or not we bishops of Australia should make the same radical gesture as our Chilean counterparts remains an open question. However, what is indisputable is the need for deep institutional change that will restore confidence and trust in the church. Nothing less than a root-to-branch reform that will align our minds and hearts to the Gospel will do. It is time for the church, especially its leaders, to listen with great humility and embark upon a journey of radical conversion. I firmly believe that we must seize this time of crisis as a catalyst for change and not as a temporary aberration. We must have the courage to do whatever is needed to bring about the church that is worthy of Christ and his Gospel. We should not fear this time. For it can be a great opportunity and a tremendous blessing in disguise.

Brothers and sisters,

More than ever before, we need the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit as we engage in the task of renewing and re-energising the church. We need a new Pentecost that will move us from decay to growth, from chaos to harmony, from disillusionment to joy. We need to find new fresh ways of being church that reflect authentically the person and message of Jesus and empower our people with fresh hope.

To this end, we must become a humble, listening and discerning church. The Plenary Council that is launched today nationally will be an opportunity for us to listen humbly and with open hearts to one another and especially to what the Spirit is saying to us at this time. We are going to build the agenda for the Plenary Council together, through dialogue and prayer. Just as the disciples gathered with Mary in the upper room, we commit ourselves to listening, discerning and acting on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The journey towards the Plenary Council begins with a two-year preparatory period. Between now and February 2019, there will be *Open Dialogue* and *Listening Sessions* where everyone is invited to share their own story, and their hopes for the church, and to hear those of others. There will be opportunities to be part of this process will be available locally, regionally and at a diocesan level. I have appointed Richard McMahon, Director of our Diocesan Pastoral Planning Office to be the main contact for the Plenary Council process. He will work with our parishes, schools and deanery

and diocesan pastoral councils to make the engagement process as inclusive and as fruitful as possible.

At Pentecost, Mary and the disciples of Jesus gathered and discerned their future in the light of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. The Holy Spirit gave them a breath of fresh air and a source of great hope. As we gather today and discern our life of faith, may we also be bolstered by the fresh energy of the Holy Spirit. May we journey forward and witness to the reign of God, welcoming all peoples and cultures that Jesus called us to embrace.

posted by: Joseph Younes

<https://catholicoutlook.org/author/jyounes/>

**CatholicOutlook**  
News from the Diocese of Parramatta