Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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"Father, I made your name known to them" (John 17:26).

Acts 22:30; 23:6-11; *Jn 17:20-26*

As the church year approaches Pentecost, the Acts of the Apostles focuses on Paul, now a prisoner being sent to Rome to present his case to the emperor. In today's

reading, we witness his skill at setting the two main parties in the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees and Sadducees, against each other over the question of resurrection. The Roman commander has to rescue him from the tumult and then sends him on to Rome. There he will spend the remainder of his life under house arrest, then be executed by the mad emperor Nero in a purge of Christians as scapegoats for his arson.

As his own life is fading from the picture, Paul has only his faith in the power of the Holy Spirit to assure him that the church will survive these birth pangs and the many threats from within and without. He has run the race and kept the faith. The rest is up to the Spirit.

In our own time we have seen enough abuse, cover-ups, arrogance and deception in both our political and church leaders to be realistic about the challenges facing us as citizens and disciples. Jesus' promise to us was not to take us out of the world or to spare us its temptations and traps. The Spirit he was sending was not going to do everything for us. The Spirit is our Advocate, a guide and helper, as we meet the challenges and work to overcome obstacles and threats facing us.

In the words often attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola, we are to "pray as though everything depended on God, and to work as though everything depended on us." It is this collaboration that honors God while affirming our freedom and dignity to do our part. The Holy Spirit is active through us, even as divinity needed humanity to make Jesus.

Pentecost will be the breath of God into our mortal bodies if we welcome it. The Spirit will enter our flesh, guide our feet, give strength to our hands and fill our hearts with love. If we present ourselves as we are, God will transform us as members of the body of Christ, sent to redeem the world through us.

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