

## “Out of One, Many”

**Intro.** In recent years, there has been great interest in recovering and re-discovering our family ancestry. I like to watch a TV show in which people – some well-known – explore their family history and discover things and people they knew nothing about. The often unknown stories are about the courage it took to leave home because of famine in Ireland in the mid-1800s. Or awful religious or economic oppression in England and France in the 16 and 17 centuries; and in our own time all over the world. The disciples were soon to learn about the Holy Spirit that expanded their understanding of family.

**I.** As in the different telling of the Ascension in last week’s readings, so too in the scripture of today. The details are different, but the experience of the disciples was the same; something extraordinary happened to them. The Lord told them to wait for the coming of an Advocate, the Spirit. There was no way to adequately describe it. They became different people, no longer afraid or wondering what to do. Some of *us* have had some very powerful

experiences which changed our lives forever. Some were difficult, but more were wonderful. The disciples could not imagine how their lives would change after that day. Prior to the Pentecost experience, they thought the mission was mostly to the “Chosen People,” the Israelites. That is clear from the Acts of the Apostles reading last week. *Just* as the Lord is ready to ascend to heaven, almost with one foot off the ground, they asked – for the thousandth time – “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” It is a wonder the Lord didn’t cry. Even after *three years* they wouldn’t let go of the belief the Messiah would rebuild Jerusalem and conquer the Roman oppressors, thinking the Kingdom of God was about power over other people, rather than salvation. The Pentecost experience put that idea to rest forever. People from all over the world were in Jerusalem for a religious festival. It was like festivals today. People came to sell and buy things; to try new foods; and to experience the variety of cultures. It was not a coincidence that God sent the

Spirit at that time. The Lord wanted the disciples to spread the good news of salvation to every creature. What an opportunity! When those people went home, they brought the Pentecost revelation with them. As the disciples traveled across the world, the seeds had already been planted and ready to be harvested. Some of the disciples had no knowledge of languages other than their own. But now, out of their mouths came strange words that everyone understood.

**Concl.** The disciples initially thought the Spirit only worked through *them*. As they ventured farther from the familiar territories of Israel, they were surprised to discover it didn't matter whether one was Jew or Greek; free or slave [M. McGlone, *N.C.R.*, 5/23/21]. Only after the coming of the Holy Spirit did the disciples begin to understand their mission was to the whole world: to the Parthians, Egyptians, Libyans, Romans, Arabs and beyond. Today we are a part of that same mission. We are Irish and Polish; French and Canadian; Hispanic and Caribbean; Asian and African; and many more. On

U.S. coins [show] are the words, "e pluribus unum," "out of many, one." It is one of the great strengths of our country. The same could be said of our church. Out of many peoples, united, under the one God. **We are no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free. We are Christians, daughters and sons of the one God, who is in all. Would that we could all speak the language understood by everyone: the language of love, the language of God.**

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