

From a sermon of an unknown African author of the sixth century

They spoke in every tongue. It was God's will to demonstrate the presence of the Holy Spirit at that moment by enabling those who had received him to speak in every tongue. For we must understand, my dear brethren, that it is through the Holy Spirit that love is poured out in our hearts.

Now the love of God was to gather together the Church all over the world. Consequently, while a single man, if he received the Holy Spirit, could speak in every tongue, now the one Church in its unity, which is established by the Holy Spirit, speaks in every tongue.

And so if anyone says to one of us: "You have received the Holy Spirit; why do you not speak in tongues?" he should reply: "I do speak in every tongue. For I am in the body of Christ, the Church, which speaks in every tongue. For what did God signify by the presence of the Holy Spirit if it was not that his Church would speak in every tongue?"

In this way the Lord's promise was fulfilled: "No one puts new wine into old wineskins, but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both will be preserved."

It was with good reason, then, that some people, when they heard the apostles speaking in every tongue, said; "They are filled with new wine." For they had become fresh wine-skins, they had been renewed by the grace of holiness, so that when they were filled with the new wine, that is, with the Holy Spirit, they spoke with fervor in every tongue; and by this spectacular miracle they foreshadowed the spread of the Church through all nations speaking every tongue.

Celebrate, then, this day as members of the one body of the Church. Your celebration will not be in vain if you are what you celebrate, if you hold fast to the Church which the Lord filled with his Holy Spirit; he acknowledges it as his own as it grows all over the world, and is himself acknowledged by his Church. The bridegroom has not lost his bride or been tricked into receiving a stranger.

For to you who are established in every nation as Christ's Church, Christ's members, Christ's body, Christ's bride, St Paul says: "Forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Notice that, while bidding us to forbear one another, St Paul speaks of love; when speaking of the hope of unity, he points to the bond of peace. This is the house of God, built with living stones, in which so great a householder loves to dwell.