"Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit…” (Acts 2:3-4a) These flames are a manifestation of varied spiritual gifts bestowed on the disciples at Pentecost. Though many and diverse, as are the various parts of the body, these gifts from one spiritual body, the Church. The Jerusalem Temple, soon to be destroyed, (c. 70 AD) will be replaced. The new Temple will be built of living stones, the believers, and it is the dwelling place of God. These gifts, when exercised, form the glue that holds this holy edifice together and makes it a habitation for God and man.

This new Temple cannot be destroyed and will be the center and centering place of the whole world. Therefore, what the Holy Spirit has brought together let no man divide. The gift of service and the gift of faith go hand-in-hand to build up the body, the Church. One is evidence of the other, and one cannot exist without the other. (James 2:14-26)

It is important to note that on Pentecost these gifts descended on all present, not just the Jews, but also Greeks, slaves, and free persons. All are baptized by the one Spirit into the one body. Up to the present day, we continue to baptize in this one Spirit. We baptize all persons who present themselves and thus are extending the Church to the ends of the earth. This forms a church whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. (Voltaire) In that first
Pentecost moment, Christianity began to see itself as a universal rather than a tribal or regional religion. This is why they very soon called themselves "catholic" (universal) as early as the year 108 AD.

The implication for the universal church is that there is unity through the Spirit. Unity not uniform sameness, but a richness of diversity. Community with a diversity as rich as the varied gifts bestowed by the Spirit. The gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, and prophecy, are given as the Spirit wishes. (1 Corinthians 12: 8-11) All these gifts are to be used to build up the Kingdom by those on whom they are bestowed. One gift is given to all as bestowed by Jesus before he ascended – it is the power to forgive sins. Jesus forgave sins in connection with his many healings and exorcisms and so it needs to be extended as we share our particular gifts with others. In the care of others, forgiveness is crucial and in many cases may be the only action required. Recall that we all come to the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of our sins. (Luke 1:77)

Today on this Pentecost let us open ourselves to the Holy Spirit Fire, to enkindle in us the fire of God's love.

Let us pray, send forth Your Spirit and we shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth. O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.