

- As we approach the end of the Easter season with Pentecost a couple of weeks away, the Church intensifies focus on the Holy Spirit.
- Your calendars may show the Ascension as this Thursday, but most dioceses of the U.S. (including our own) transferred it to the 7th Sunday of Easter—next Sunday.
- And Pentecost—the descent of the Holy Spirit in His fullness upon the apostles—is celebrated the weekend after that—for the Holy Spirit is that “another Advocate” of whom Jesus speaks in our Gospel today—the Spirit of truth to remain with the Church until Jesus’ promised second coming.
-
- By the way, when we speak of the Holy Spirit’s “fullness” coming upon the Church, it doesn’t mean that the wisdom and grace of God is “exhausted”, but rather that the Church has received the full measure which God deems appropriate and necessary.
- ...reminding us of St. Paul: “...*grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.*” (Ephesians 4:7)...quite similar to Jesus’ parable of the measure of the talents of gold distributed to the servants according to their abilities.

-
- Now in our first reading today we hear a story in the Acts of the Apostles of Peter and John laying hands on some baptized who had not yet received the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
 - This is one of the Church bases of the sacrament of Confirmation—reception of the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon the person...usually the last sacrament of Christian initiation received—the others being baptism and the Eucharist.
 - The sacrament of Confirmation “completes” Christian initiation, providing the person with strengthening grace from God to go forth to be an even stronger witness to Christ.
 -
 - We see this even with the apostles. In John’s Gospel we hear that Jesus after His Resurrection, and having appeared to the apostles: “...

breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’” (John 20:22-23)...reminding us also of confession and how the sacraments are so intricately interlinked...

- ...and yet, as Luke chronicles in chapter 2 of Acts, the fullness of the Holy Spirit would descend upon them at Pentecost, giving them courage to go out and even give their lives for the Gospel.
-
- So God doesn’t normally “firehose” us with His grace, but rather gives it—or, rather, entrusts it to us—in manageable portions for our human limitation.
- You can think of it as a type of “strengthening by increments”—like an athlete training for a competition. He doesn’t go from couch potato to gold medalist in one step, but trains and strengthens incrementally over time.
- Likewise, the Holy Spirit strengthens us over time and through the sacraments...IF we, as Jesus exhorts us in the Gospel, are faithful to the teaching and commandments of God.
- If we do not do that...can we say we really love Christ? That we really love the Good, which God is?
- For, like the athlete, without practice and training he becomes weaker, until he can no longer compete at all.
- So...we have to work out; we must continually strive towards the Good...exercising our faith and the spiritual strength God gives us in the sacraments and through prayer...lest we become spiritual slugs, so to speak.
- For grace is like knowledge: you can have a wall full of Ph.ds, but if you never use the knowledge acquired, it does you no good.
- But...fortunately for us, God’s gym is open 24/7, as is the availability of the best of trainers, the Holy Spirit—IF we call upon Him in faith.

-
- Now Jesus tells us in the Gospel today that the Holy Spirit would be with the Church always.

- So it is pointless to go searching for truth and for the fulfillment of our souls in dark corners and obscure philosophies; it is offered right in front of us on a silver platter.
- That is the wisdom of learning our faith well—because it is of God, and thus is the ultimate—indeed, the only—true fulfillment of our souls.
- The “sex, drugs and rock and roll” philosophy followed by so many is so much cotton candy—sweet to the taste, but unfulfilling and without nutrition...leaving emptiness, spiritual malnutrition and rotten teeth.
- Rather, to seek God is the highest activity of mankind, because it utilizes the highest faculty of Man—reason—to search the highest Being and truth, and therefore spiritual fulfillment.
- And at our ultimate judgment, it is not diplomas earned, trophies won, pleasures enjoyed that will lead to our salvation. We will simply be judged on how well we have loved and honored God and neighbor... how we have used those talents of grace entrusted to us in this life.
- Thus, anything we do in life which does not in some way contribute to love of God and neighbor in some way is precious time wasted.

- So, let us learn more and more about our beautiful faith, so that we may, as St. Peter exhorts us in the second reading “*Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope*”...for by your word and charitable example you lead others to Christ, and thus to salvation—the greatest of all gifts.
- As St. James assures us: “...*whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*” (James 5:20)
- There is no reason to seek truth anywhere else; on the contrary, there is every reason to root ourselves right where we are—in this Catholic Christian faith Jesus established upon the Rock of Peter and the apostles and nourished by the Spirit...and which endures until He returns to us, for He promises: “*Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” (Matthew 28:20)

[Acts 8:5-8, 14-17](#)

Philip went down to the city of Samaria
and proclaimed the Christ to them.

With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip
when they heard it and saw the signs he was doing.

For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice,
came out of many possessed people,
and many paralyzed or crippled people were cured.
There was great joy in that city.

Now when the apostles in Jerusalem
heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God,
they sent them Peter and John,
who went down and prayed for them,
that they might receive the Holy Spirit,
for it had not yet fallen upon any of them;
they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
Then they laid hands on them
and they received the Holy Spirit.

[Ps 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (1) **Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Shout joyfully to God, all the earth,
sing praise to the glory of his name;
proclaim his glorious praise.

Say to God, “How tremendous are your deeds!”

R. **Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

“Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you,
sing praise to your name!”

Come and see the works of God,
his tremendous deeds among the children of Adam.

R. **Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

He has changed the sea into dry land;
through the river they passed on foot;
therefore let us rejoice in him.

He rules by his might forever.

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Hear now, all you who fear God, while I declare
what he has done for me.

Blessed be God who refused me not
my prayer or his kindness!

R. Let all the earth cry out to God with joy.

or:

R. Alleluia.

[1 Pt 3:15-18](#)

Reading 2

Beloved:

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.

Always be ready to give an explanation
to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope,
but do it with gentleness and reverence,

keeping your conscience clear,
so that, when you are maligned,
those who defame your good conduct in Christ
may themselves be put to shame.

For it is better to suffer for doing good,
if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

For Christ also suffered for sins once,
the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous,
that he might lead you to God.

Put to death in the flesh,
he was brought to life in the Spirit.

[Jn 14:15-21](#)

Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And I will ask the Father,

and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always,
the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept,
because it neither sees nor knows him.

But you know him, because he remains with you,
and will be in you.

I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

In a little while the world will no longer see me,
but you will see me, because I live and you will live.

On that day you will realize that **I am in my Father
and you are in me and I in you.**

**Whoever has my commandments and observes them
is the one who loves me.**

And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I will love him and reveal myself to him.”