

Pentecost Sunday: Living Our Lives In the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104:1,24,29-30,31,34; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7,12-13; John 20:19-23

Where is the Holy Spirit? Where the Church is, there's the Holy Spirit. He is the giver of life of the Church. We confess in our Creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the giver of life."

Our responsorial psalm on this feast of the Pentecost echoes the Church's reliance on the Holy Spirit and the confidence in his powerful presence. "Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth" (Ps 104:30). It is a fitting petition for all times and seasons to ask for the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, but it asks to be docile and receptive to its actions.

Our liturgy this Sunday leads our memory back to the great event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit like tongues of fire upon the followers of Jesus (cf Acts 2:3). Deep inside them burned a flame of love manifested in their joyful attitudes, actions, and voices. The Holy Spirit incredibly recreated them, the Church was born, and the mission to go out and evangelize is her life!

Let us remember that it is not just about an extraordinary event in Jerusalem many centuries ago. It is an ongoing event in our lives as Christians, for we cannot be Christians or live a Christian life without the Holy Spirit, just as we couldn't live without breathing.

How do we know if we are living in the Holy Spirit? How is the Holy Spirit's working manifest in your life?

The gift of the Holy Spirit means several things. It means that God is not distant. He is present through the Holy Spirit as "best of comforters, welcome guest of our soul, sweet refreshment, rest in our toil, cool in the heat, relief to our pain" (Sequence). Jesus sometimes calls the Holy Spirit as our advocate, that is, the one "called to our side" to help us stand up (cf Jn 14:26) as conscience, as repentance, as a way back to God, as an inner moral compass, an urge to pray, as the desire to forgive, as a concern for someone who has experienced tragedy, as an outrage against injustice, as direction for the future.

Often we tend to limit the Holy Spirit's presence to extraordinary charismatic gifts, like healings, speaking in tongues, and prophecies. While it is good to ask for these gifts, it is worth knowing that there are ordinary gifts that manifest in our attitudes and encounters with others. Hence, action speaks louder than words. Our patron St. Therese of the Child Jesus taught us that we could achieve great holiness through ordinary gifts. She taught us her little ways, which consisted in performing "little virtues," not seeking grandiose actions or awe-inspiring sacrifices, but little acts of holiness and doing them with great love.

The ordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit manifest when we open our hearts in prayer; when we make wise choices; when we are faithful to our vows and promises; when we appreciate the majesty of God's presence in the world; when we try to understand others; when we see behind sinners their dignity; when we try to unite rather than divide; when we show courage not only in proclaiming but in living the Gospel. These are lovely everyday gifts of the Holy Spirit. But remember, the evil spirit, the Devil, also works in the vineyard of God's children. St. Peter, in his letter, said that the Devil is like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pt 5:8). The works of the evil spirit could cloud the gifts of the Holy Spirit by sowing seeds of doubts amid the good things you've done, stirring up disunity within the communities and families, comforting you if you commit sin, nurturing the appetite to spread rumors and falsehood, building up egotistical attitude, unforgiveness, and promoting worldliness that weakens our moral choices and leads us away from who we are, as God's beloved children. When it happens, pray to St. Michael, the Archangel — "Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil; May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls. Amen."

The workings of the Holy Spirit are uniquely different from person to person, but it's always for our benefit. St. Paul speaks on this in his letter to the Corinthians "there are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual, the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit" (1 Cor 12:3-7).

The disposition of the second-grader students of St. Theresa School is worth noticing — their joy and receptivity! They are noticeable during the celebration of their First Communion and Confirmation at the Holy Mass. Their amen and all other responses were distinctly loud and joyful, and they were all singing! Their innocent voices filled the church like angels and heavenly hosts. Their gestures throughout the celebration and reception of the Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Confirmation were very reverent. After the prayer after Communion, they interpreted two religious songs with the sacred actions with heart and soul. Those around can't help but smile, expressing their wow to these children. One of the retired Catholic School principals commented that she had never experienced this kind of aura in grade school students.

They also participated in the culmination of the Flores de Mayo as angels during the procession and crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And they performed their two numbers during the program excellently, performing Hawaiian dance and religious gestures with the song Ave Maria. According to Sr. Ana la Cruz, SPC, their adviser, she dedicated an area of her classroom for prayer and encouraged the students to say good morning to Jesus and offer their prayers when they come to class. It became part of their morning routine. Beautiful! Kudos to Sr. Ana and especially their supportive parents.

I believe the Holy Spirit speaks to us through them. Their disposition reminds us of how we worship and live in the Holy Spirit. And like our patron saint Therese, persistent in doing small acts of holiness and small acts of virtues are ways to live in the Holy Spirit. The little virtues or acts of holiness are like flowers that grow in the garden of receptivity or docility to the Holy Spirit. We nurtured this by increasing our prayer life.

Before the Lord's ascension into heaven, he told the disciples to go to Galilee to wait for him there. They patiently waited in prayer, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Waiting in prayer increases the longing and joyful anticipation for the gift of God himself. With our prayerfulness and docility, we can access the mighty power of the Holy Spirit that has already been bestowed on us through the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

Let us live what we confess and live our lives in the Holy Spirit. What has been given to us by God is not a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control (cf. 2 Timothy 1:7).

God bless you!

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