

HOMILY
Pentecost.5.31.20
St. Bernard Church
Deacon Tim Sullivan

Last Sunday, we celebrated the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus into heaven. In his homily, Fr. Shane emphasized that Jesus did not abandon humanity when He ascended to the Father. He left us the Church, and in the Church He left the sacraments. Through the sacraments, the grace and power that Jesus shared when He walked the earth are made available to all who would over the ages become members of the Catholic Church.

Jesus said, in the Gospel of John, that He would not leave us orphans, that He had to leave so that He could send us the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who would help us and be with us forever. And He promised us that, through the Holy Spirit, we would see even greater things than we saw when Jesus was physically present with His followers.

Today, we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the followers of Jesus, accompanied by a strong driving wind and tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit brought a new power and energy to the disciples, most of whom had been cowardly, totally lacking in courage, during the time that Jesus was tortured and crucified.

When we read the Acts of the Apostles, we learn of how the power of the Holy Spirit was manifested in the earliest Christian community. Peter, who had publicly denied Jesus only a few weeks previously, was preaching boldly and fearlessly. Thousands were joining the new Church almost every day.

Peter and other disciples had the gift of healing, so much so that people believed even Peter's shadow would cure those who were ill. Cloths that had been touched by Saint Paul were applied to the sick and to the possessed. The diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit is constantly described as leading the disciples in very specific ways, telling them where to go, who to speak to, and who to join with in building the Church.

The teaching of the Church is that the Holy Spirit comes to us in the sacrament of Confirmation.

So I want to ask a couple of questions for our reflection this evening.

How has your Confirmation changed your life?

How have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Yes, as Fr. Shane said last week, the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit are present in the sacraments. But for that power to be experienced in our lives, more is required than to just be present when the ritual of a sacrament is performed.

Most of us here this evening were confirmed when we were young, at least under the age of 18.

My suggestion this evening, for all of us who have been confirmed, is to take ownership of our Confirmation. I'm asking you, tonight, to reclaim the power that was made available to you at your Confirmation.

How can we do this?

To do this, we need to have an understanding of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. I've referred several times already to the "power" of the Holy Spirit. What are some ways the power of the Holy Spirit can become real to each of us?

As Saint Paul says in his Letter to the Romans, the Holy Spirit can give us words to say. An example of this is when my wife, Connie, one of seven sisters, was asked to give the eulogy at her mother's funeral. The Holy Spirit not only gave her the words to say, but also gave her the perfect delivery in saying them. Everyone present knew that her eulogy was divinely inspired.

The Holy Spirit prompts us to do things we otherwise might not have thought of doing. A friend of mine tragically lost his wife 3 years ago. She was only 34 years old. A few months later, my friend told me something unusual had happened.

He kept getting this urge to call his uncle. He wasn't close to his uncle. He really didn't want to call him. But this prompting wouldn't go away, so he placed the call to his uncle. As soon as the uncle heard my friend's voice, he burst into tears. He said to my friend, "It means so much to me that you would call me on the anniversary of my wife's death."

My friend didn't know it was the anniversary of the death of his aunt. The prompting of the Holy Spirit initiated the process of connecting two men who were both grieving their lost wives.

The Holy Spirit has given every person in this church this evening one or more special gifts, which the Church calls charisms. Charisms are gifts God gives you for building up the Body of Christ. As St. Paul says in today's Second Reading from 1st Corinthians, "To each individual the manifestation of the

Spirit is given for some benefit.” The Holy Spirit also guides you in how to use your charisms and who to share them with.

We should pray often for the intercession of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Here’s one prayer to the Holy Spirit which I’m going to ask you to pray with me by repeating each phrase after me. This prayer is based upon one that Msgr. Gaalaas uses and has recommended whenever he has the opportunity. I strongly recommend that you use this prayer or similar words on a regular basis.

“Holy Spirit, I need Your grace and power/ to sustain the commitment I have made/ to believe and follow Jesus.

Enlighten me.

Guide me.

Strengthen me.

Console me.

Tell me what I should do.

Give me Your orders.

I promise to be and to do/ all that You desire of me

And accept all that You permit to happen to me.

Let me only know Your will.

Amen.”