

Living the Spirit  
Pentecost

**Happy Birthday to the Church!**

Often when we think back to our childhood days we may stop to think of which days were very happy ones. Surely most of us will think of our birthday as among the happiest. I certainly can do so. It was a day when special attention was paid and my simple desires were met as far as possible. [As an aside, I always wanted more books.] I was fortunate to have the blessing of my Mother until I was forty years old. Even at the end of her days she never forgot to celebrate my day – I have to think that is what Mothers do. Their love will always have a bit of the mysterious.

Today Pentecost is celebrated. The readings at Mass give us a chance to reflect on the meaning of the feast. In the Gospel we hear Jesus as he commissions his apostles, “As the Father has sent Me, so I send you.” By this statement made to those first believers Jesus tell his followers that their mission is to be a continuation of His own. That mission is to bring salvation and redemption to humankind. It is a mission that is yours and mine. Jesus chooses to rely on us.

In the readings we hear how the apostles receive the Holy Spirit. But so do all who were persevering in prayer with Mary. Jesus fulfills his promise to send this Holy Spirit, a Paraclete or Advocate, a Comforter and Consoler. Jesus puts this Holy Spirit in charge of His Church as much as He puts the Church in charge of his mission. He has chosen to rely on us but we must rely on Him in order to accomplish His will.

We also hear how the Holy Spirit turns the Church into Christ’s Body. Each of us has a part of that Body as a member of Christ. But only the Holy Spirit can designate properly who does what and how it all fits together. It is worth thinking about all this as we try to understand the role of our Bishops and the Holy Father. It is worth realizing how the priesthood fits in the workings of the Church by the power of the Spirit. It is worth realizing that **the laity and consecrated persons are a vital part of the one and only mission of the Church.** All work together to find salvation, holiness and God.

We also learn from Pentecost how the Holy Spirit manages to inspire Christians. Just as he did on that Pentecost. Visitors from all over heard the apostles in their own language. The main point is not that the Holy Spirit inspires the preachers, but that that He inspires the listeners! It is not the supernatural quality of the words that in the end matter, but the supernatural quality of the listening.

How can I share with you some practical thoughts that will intensify your awareness of your call to be an active believer and a working member of the Church? Truth tells me that my words will fail to do this if they are not written with the aid of that same Holy Spirit to persons willing to listen and use the gifts of the Spirit given them.

To become and stay a living and vital part of the Church you will need to use the gifts given you. You surely know what they are: Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord. [There are others ways of giving name to these gifts.] Bring **wisdom** and you will desire the things of God and choose well to direct your life and its actions to God’s honor and glory. From the ordinary actions of a life that is ordinary great things can be accomplished in the pursuit of spiritual happiness. Bring understanding to your learning of the mysteries of faith. Then you will be blessed with a fuller union with God’s presence, especially in the Eucharist. Bring **counsel** by being ever ready to heed the warnings around you of the deceits of the devil and the

dangers to salvation. See the world for what it is. Bring **courage and fortitude**. Seek from the Lord the grace to be strong. Be the kind of apostle who sets aside fear and allows grace to make of you a devout and courageous Catholic in the midst of the hostile culture now becoming prevalent in our land. Bring **knowledge** to your life of those things that help you discover God and His will for you in all things. Bring **piety** by embracing love, seeing the Father as a loving Provider, seeing the Son as a generous (and forgiving) Savior, seeing the Spirit as companion on your way to God. Bring **fear of the Lord** or reverential love of God by having a dread of sin and a fear of offending a God so good to you. Be one who loves without fear!

Every year as a part of our preparation for Confirmation we ask our candidates to come to Giftfest, where they reveal how different persons inspire them as living the gifts of the Spirit. It is possible that when we examine our spiritual life we may see that one gift or another is in our possession. It is also true that we may find that we lack one or another of the same gifts. First, do not be discouraged. The possibility of possessing them all is not so rare. Many times we are not given to see ourselves as the instruments of goodness, as images of some aspect of the divine through these gifts. Perhaps we need that lack of insight to keep our humility and avoid spiritual pride.

Just as we use these gifts for our personal growth in living the Spirit, so we should not be afraid to use them for the good of the Church. I say this as one who has looked into my soul to find the love I have for the Church. Have you looked in yours? There are so many ways in which we relate to the Church, but in the end the best way is to love the Church as we know it. If we see the Church as the people of God, real people, we will want to help the Church bring goodness to the world. This may seem impossible at times, but we will find, as those before us have found, that with God all things are possible.

There are serious challenges to the Church at this time. Too many have been touched by scandals. Too many have walked away from the pain of being believers or being seekers for truth. Some of our society's suppositions are being challenged and the Church needs us to uphold what is true and noble, like the meaning of marriage at its very roots. We must be ready to pray above all for the help we need. In some ways we must help others understand what it means for us to be Catholic Christians. We must be understanding as we do so. We must have courage, especially in the political world around us. We must stand up for the faith without giving ourselves any excuses. As we do so let us remember that Jesus told us clearly that He is the way, the Truth and the Life.

To bring truth to others, to show them the way and to give them a loving vision of life – that is what the Spirit calls us to do. That is why we pray:

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful*

*And kindle in them the fire of your love.*

*Send forth your Spirit, and they 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.*

*God love and bless you always!*

*B E NOT AFRAID!*

*Monsignor David Morrison*