

## Living the Spirit Pentecost

*As I write this insert for our bulletin, I want to review a former insert with the theme of the Holy Spirit. It was in the Year of the Priest that I originally wrote this insert. But first, I want to add a few comments on my present thoughts.*

Pentecost is the continuation of the good news brought to us by Jesus in His own mission to our humanity. We know this from the long history of our liturgy which marked Ordinary Time after the celebration of Pentecost as time “after Pentecost” until Advent. This tells us in a quiet way that all time is a time for the working of the Holy Spirit. He is as God the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. This is so, it seems to me, because He as the Spirit hovered over the waters at creation. He was at the start of the coming of the Son among us when He appears to Mary. He is present at the start of the Church. He will be present at the end of the age, as our teaching tells us.

Our world today is in vital need of devotion to the Holy Spirit. We need Him to be in our world, in our everyday life, in our cultural revolutions so evident among us. I can recommend to those of you who desire a special spirituality to Him to read and act upon the writing of our Bishop Emeritus, Bishop Cullen’s book on the Holy Spirit.

[I want you to know that I am not unaware of the desire of many to see the feminine aspect of divinity in the Holy Spirit. Some always refer to the Third Person in the Trinity by the feminine pronoun. At the same time, we must realize that there is no gender in the Trinity, other than in the Incarnated Son of God. Yet all goodness, whether seen as male or female by our minds, is found in God, at all times and in every attribution by us.]

What can I write that will meet my own expectations of sharing the meaning of this feast and of this Third Person of the Trinity with you? Surely we all know of this Person from the Creed recited in every Sunday Mass. *“We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.”*

I cannot think of this Spirit without thinking of holiness. Theologians like to tell us that the gifts of grace, which is a sharing in divine life, can be attributed to this Third Person of the Trinity. Holiness wherever it is found among us, in varying degrees or different guises, is always a gift from God. Long before I ever knew what God meant, the gifts were being given. The same can be said of you, if you were baptized as an infant.

This first acquaintance with the Spirit was a mysterious and sacramental one. In time the relationship was made formal. At a very young age I took to learning the questions from the then-used Baltimore Catechism about the Holy Ghost. This was in preparation for Confirmation. I am sure that I looked forward to it, but with a child’s understanding.

I recall that I was quite fearful of the Bishop. He was, no doubt, a kindly man, a father figure. But he was going to ask questions. What if I forgot? Besides, all the while I would have to be careful not to get my white suit dirty or mess up my special red tie. Worse, what about the bow that the children to be confirmed wore on their sleeves? Fortunately I was bypassed with the questions. But then there was the fact that I was going to be given a slight blow on the cheek to remind me to die rather than renounce my faith. Would it hurt? Well, Confirmation went well. I was on my way, with another character printed indelibly on my soul. A confirmed Christian then, now and forever!

Throughout the time until I next received the Holy Spirit in a sacramental way, I was receiving His gifts and taking note of others receiving the same. There was wisdom and knowledge and understanding in the process of my school days. There was the practical wisdom given by elders who taught me the practice of the faith as a lived reality.

How lucky I was to have fine religious women, Sisters, and then great priests to teach me about life. Life, the gift of the Spirit, is a total sum of gifts that touch the mind. The sum of gifts that speak to the heart. Counsel, piety and reverential fear were not new to me but were ordinary aspects of a Catholic boy's life. [Indeed, of yours?]

Perhaps that is how I have come to look at life, my life and that of others. It is a great adventure, filled with surprises, ever times for opening yet another gift of the Spirit. Central to all the gifts is the gift of the Eucharist, where Jesus comes and remains with us in a marvelous way. How can we really be lonely, as often we think we are, when the Spirit keeps giving us the gifts that Jesus promised?

Years ago I read that the Holy Spirit was "the forgotten God." By that was meant that we are more than likely to think of God as Father, the provident giver of our needs and wants. We think of God in Jesus as Savior, as one of us, but ever more than that. We need to enter what was called the invisible world to meet the Spirit. And enter we do, when we live the commands of Jesus. What the Creed does not say is the truth that the Spirit is the Spirit of Love, for God is love. Whatever genuine love we have experienced is always a sharing of this Spirit.

Once again, as in the Year of the Priest, I recall for my own well being that in the course of time, after years of preparation I was given the Spirit through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Priests are made into His gifts to the Church community. There is no priesthood as we know it without this gift of the Spirit. The priest ordained has to give himself. His loved ones sacrifice him, too, to the work and mission of the Church. But it is the Spirit through the graces and powers given, Who makes the man-become-priest a new creation. The Spirit vivifies and sanctifies.

That is why I know that when I preach the word of God, no matter how poorly or how well, I must never stop the Spirit. It is He that opens minds and hearts to truth, to Life. To the life of God shared in so many ways. I can say the same when I listen and hear my fellow priests preach this Word.

Because a priest is ordained for a purpose, it is good to know that there are three elements to his mission in the church. The older version of the rite of Orders had the bishop clearly state them: To preach, to offer Sacrifice and to forgive sin. So, the priest offers the Sacrifice of the Mass. There is far more than presiding here, as the current liturgical wisdom states. There is Christ renewing His Sacrifice of the Cross, but in an unbloody manner. There is the priest taking the sacrifices of God's People, joined to that of Jesus, and offering them to the Father in incomparable adoration and praise. It is the Spirit who sanctifies both the Gift and the offerers.

Nothing gives the priest more human satisfaction that being able to grant the forgiveness of Jesus in the sacrament of Reconciliation. It is a power so clearly given by the Spirit, for Jesus on Easter night said to his apostles, the first priests of this Covenant, "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you shall forgive are forgiven them...." O how thankful I am to all those priests who said those words for my benefit. Are you?

***May the Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life and gifts, love you always!***  
***Monsignor David Morrison***