

PENTECOST SUNDAY (2025 - ABC)

Jesus promised on numerous occasions and especially just before His Ascension that He would send His Spirit to us. Today, on (the vigil of Pentecost) (Pentecost Sunday), we celebrate that day on which the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and the Blessed Virgin Mary. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles,

“Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them.”

Pentecost Sunday comes 50 days after Easter and it's the last day of the Easter Season. Jesus had come to teach and to redeem. He taught us what we must do and believe to inherit eternal life, what we must do to get to heaven. Furthermore, by the signs and wonders He worked, by curing the sick and the blind and the lame, Jesus proved that He had authority to teach as He did. Even more, on the third day after He had been crucified, when He rose from the dead, He proved He was God.

His disciples had seen all of this, and they had come to believe all that He taught. However, even though they believed, they lacked the strength and the willpower to put their faith into practice. They lacked the courage to profess openly what they believed privately. They were afraid to live as Jesus had taught them to live. For His part, Jesus was constantly telling them, **“Do not be afraid.”** It was our Lord's plan to send down the Holy Spirit to give them strength and courage and to complete His work of redemption in them. That is why He told them **“Do not be afraid.”**

Now notice what happened when the Holy Spirit came. The Apostles were “confirmed” in their faith. They received courage and strength. We read in the Acts of the Apostles,

“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. They went out into the square and publicly proclaimed their faith before the large crowds of people who were present.” In fact, Saint Peter spoke so forcefully, that 3000 were baptized and were added that day who **“devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.”**

When the Apostles received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, it was the first time anyone had ever received the Sacrament of Confirmation. This coming of the Holy Spirit changed the Apostles, and that change in the Apostles leaves us with two points to consider:

First: The work of our redemption is really a work of the Holy Trinity, that is of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all acting together to bring about our salvation. The Son offers the sacrifice, the Father receives it and the Spirit sanctifies it.

Second: While Jesus taught the Apostles what it was they had to do and believe, it was the Holy Spirit who gave them the courage to live their faith. So too with us. We receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation, and He gives us courage to live our faith as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to do this in the face of all the adversities and difficulties we may encounter in this life.

So who is the Holy Spirit, and what do we as Catholics believe about Him? Well, the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Blessed Trinity. He is called the Spirit because of how He revealed Himself to the Apostles, **“as a mighty wind.”** The Latin word for breath is *spiritus* from which we get spirit. That word was translated into German as *Heilige Geist* from which we get Holy Ghost.

Now the Father is the first person of the Blessed Trinity and the Son the second person. The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete (or Advocate), is the third person. However, that doesn't make the Holy Spirit the bronze medal winner of the Holy Trinity. He has equal dignity with the Father and the Son. He is neither younger nor older than the Son or the Father, but just like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit has always existed from before the world was ever created.

We distinguish the three persons of the Holy Trinity by saying that the Son proceeds from the Father, and that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and so in order of procession, we call them first, second, and third. This may seem hard to understand, but that's because the mystery of the Holy Trinity is the greatest mystery of our Catholic faith. While we can understand it at some level, for the most part, we just have to accept it because it is beyond our understanding.

So what does the Holy Spirit do? Well, to the Holy Spirit we attribute the guidance and supervision of the Church. The Holy Spirit watches over its leaders, those appointed to positions of authority. He gives them special graces to help them act in ways which will be best for the growth of the Church. From the very beginning of the Church, the Holy Spirit has guided those entrusted with spreading the gospel, the priests, the bishops, and especially the pope.

The Holy Spirit also guides us in our daily lives. He arises from the love of the Father and Son for each other. Thus, the gifts we receive from God out of love for us can be understood more readily when attributed to the Holy Spirit. When we are confirmed, we receive many gifts from the Holy Spirit. These include the gifts of Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord. These seven special gifts of the Holy Spirit are mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah (Is 11:2).

The gift of Wisdom, helps us to see things clearly, to judge correctly concerning the things of God. So for example, we might see in some trial a test from God and recognize it as such, or it might become plain to us how one course of action will lead us to God and another will lead us away.

The second gift is Understanding. It gives us insights into the mysteries of our faith. We see things more clearly. For example, we might not understand the role of Mary in the Church, or the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, but by praying for the gift of understanding, God gives us the grace to see and the teaching becomes more understandable to us.

The third gift is Counsel. This gift enables us to make decisions about practical matters, what is the right thing for us to do. For example, fathers and mothers can pray for counsel on how to raise their children or how to overcome some problem in their family. Through the gift of counsel, we are also warned when the devil is tempting us. So this gift gives us insights on how to resist and avoid his temptations.

The fourth gift is Fortitude. Fortitude gives us the courage to love God in the face of obstacles and temptations, and it gives us the strength to do what is right.

The fifth gift is Knowledge. This gift enables us to see the hand of God in creation and the presence of God in the world. It helps us to see that we are not independent or autonomous but rather, that we are dependent upon God. Through it, we see how all things fit together in God's great plan for the world.

The sixth gift is Piety. This gift attracts us to God. It helps us see how we need Him in our lives. Piety enables us to see the goodness of God and to love God as a Father and to obey His will in all things.

The seventh and last of these special gifts is Fear of the Lord. This gift inspires within us a great awe and reverence for Our Lord, and that in turn keeps us from offending Him by sin. Fear of the Lord helps us to see how infinite God is and how we as creatures must serve Him.

Besides these seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, there are also twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit. They are Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Generosity, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty, Self-control, and Chastity (CCC 1832).

You might think of these fruits like the fruit on a tree. As the tree matures, it produces fruit. In a similar way, as we mature in our faith with the help of the Holy Spirit's gifts, these fruits of the Holy Spirit, Charity, Joy, Peace and so on become present in us and are revealed in our lives.

The gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit remind us of one last point, the importance of praying to the Holy Spirit. We need to ask for these things in our lives. Jesus said, **"Ask and you shall receive."** We can forget to pray to the Holy Spirit. We can fail to ask Him for what we need, but it's important that we take the time to do so, that we intentionally take the time to ask.

So, never forget to pray to the Holy Spirit, especially in times when you need guidance or when you need the strength to carry out some very great or important decision in your lives. Getting married, buying a home, when and how many children to have, changing jobs and so on are all examples of times when we should especially pray to the Holy Spirit. We should also pray to Him in times when we have to stand up for our faith and need the courage to do so.

Lastly, I want to say something especially to parents. The family is an image of the Blessed Trinity. Just as the Holy Spirit proceeds from the love which exists between the Father for the Son, so too in the family, children proceed from the love which exists between a husband and wife. So, married couples should pray especially to the Holy Spirit for the courage to be open to life and God's gift of children. Here keep in mind God's words in Psalm 127, **"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward."**

The Holy Spirit made the apostles' faith come alive on Pentecost. He will do the same for us when we ask for His gifts. So then, let us always ask the Holy Spirit for his gifts, especially the gift to be strong in our Catholic Faith and to grow in our love and knowledge of God. Amen.