

May 23, 2010

I have a great devotion to the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, the bond of unity and love between the Father and the Son. Each day I invoke the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit a number of times to help me fulfill my personal and pastoral responsibilities.

This weekend we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost which also marks the conclusion of the Easter season. It is a wonderful occasion for each of us to renew our dedication and devotion to the Holy Spirit whom we first received when we were baptized and whose fullness we have received when we were confirmed by the bishop.

We say correctly that we are temples of the Holy Spirit. Jesus and the Father gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower us to live our lives each day in communion with the Blessed Trinity and share God's love with others.

I would like to consider the Holy Spirit from the perspective of empowering. The eternal Word became man through the power of the Holy Spirit. At the Annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she had found favor with God and that she would conceive and bear a Son, Mary asked, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" The Angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most high will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:34-35).

At Jesus' Baptism, when He came from the water, St. Luke reports: "The heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him" (Matthew 3:16). The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in His humanity to remain completely faithful to the will of His Father.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He entrusted to His apostles His mission of extending His teachings and baptizing those who would come to believe in Him. How could they accomplish this mission? Jesus, who often told the apostles and disciples to have no fear and who assured them that He would not leave them orphans, said to them: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

On the first Pentecost, Jesus’ promise was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles, appearing to them as tongues of fire. These once timid and fearful apostles went out into the streets of Jerusalem and began preaching the Lordship of Jesus with incredible boldness. They preached Jesus’ Gospel of repentance, baptized those who believed, and through the laying on of hands, bestowed the Holy Spirit upon those who had become members of the Body of Christ through Baptism.

The Holy Spirit remains active within the Church. For example, it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. It is also through the power of the Holy Spirit that you and I were made children of the Father, brothers and sisters of Christ Jesus, members of His Body, and empowered to be faithful to His Gospel and share His love with others.

Jesus expects each of us to spread His Gospel of hope, peace, reconciliation, justice, and love in our families, workplaces, and neighborhoods. How can we be faithful to Jesus and His expectations? The Holy Spirit gives us the courage and the power to overcome sin and selfishness and make us missionaries of God’s love.

Whatever our age or vocation in life, we all have challenges, crosses, and obstacles. Yet, we have nothing to fear. There is no reason for us to be paralyzed with anxieties. Jesus' promise has been fulfilled in each of us through the Sacrament of Confirmation: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to be with you always...The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you" (John 14:15,23).

Live each day with courage and optimism. Strive to become all that the Lord calls you to be. The Holy Spirit abides within you with His seven-fold gifts to empower you to meet any challenge that comes your way.