

May 31, 2009

On Sunday, the Feast of Pentecost, the seven joyous weeks of Easter come to an end with the fulfillment of Jesus' promise: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

At the Last Supper, Jesus instructed His apostles that it is now time for Him to suffer, die, rise, and return to the Father. They were saddened, but Jesus promised that He would not leave them orphans. Several times He spoke about sending them the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete. "If you love me and obey the commands I give you, I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete – to be with you always: the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:15-17).

Jesus further promised: "The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will instruct you in everything and remind you of all that I told you" (Jn 14:26).

At the Last Supper, Jesus spoke about the need for the Holy Spirit in order that the apostles could be faithful witnesses to Him: "When the Paraclete comes, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father – and whom I myself will send from the Father – He will bear witness on my behalf. You must bear witness as well" (Jn 15:26-27).

Finally, Jesus promised once more: "When He comes, however, being the Spirit of truth, He will guide you to all truth" (Jn 16:13).

We might appreciate the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Blessed Trinity, as a "bond." The Holy Spirit is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is also the bond between Christ and all of us who are His living Body, the Church. The Holy Spirit is given to us to draw us to Christ. The Spirit manifests the risen Lord to us, recalls His words to us, and opens our minds to

understanding His death and resurrection. It is the Holy Spirit who makes the mystery of Christ present to us so that we, in turn, can witness to Christ's love to others.

Before Pentecost, the apostles were fearful to speak openly about Christ. When the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, they began to speak openly in the streets of Jerusalem with much confidence. These frightened fishermen had become courageous heralds of the Good News of the Gospel. They would spend the rest of their lives spreading the Good News of Jesus with courage, even as they endured many difficulties. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they would suffer persecution with joy. Nothing could stop them from proclaiming Jesus as Savior and Lord.

What about us? Jesus bestows His Holy Spirit upon us first in Baptism and in fullness in Confirmation, so that we might be drawn into the union and love of the Blessed Trinity. It is the Spirit alone who opens us up to faith and enables us to live it each day to the full. Every time we celebrate Mass, it is the Holy Spirit who unites us more deeply with Christ and transforms us into Him.

The Holy Spirit enables us to meet our challenges and carry our crosses from day-to-day. For me, it is a most comforting truth that I am never alone but, as a temple of the Holy Spirit, God is with me always and with God, I can meet any challenge. So it is with you.

The great challenge given to all of us in Baptism and Confirmation is to bear witness to Jesus' love to others, to bring His peace and justice more fully into our families, circles of friends, workplaces, parishes, and neighborhoods. The Holy Spirit enkindles in us the fire of love and makes us missionaries of God's love, peace, mercy, and forgiveness to others. The Spirit gives us energy

to bear witness to Jesus through word and example. The Holy Spirit gives us the courage to share with others the reason for the hope that is within us.

The Feast of Pentecost is an opportune time for us to renew our devotion to the Holy Spirit who continues to abide within us. This feast reminds us to call upon the power and the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit each day that we might be more faithful disciples of the Lord and witnesses to His love.