

Fr. John's Homily for Pentecost Sunday, June 5, 2022

The Holy Spirit. The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Life, the Paraclete, the Advocate, the Consoler. Wind, Fire, Breath. Creator Spirit. Life-giving Holy Dove. Some of the many ways we refer to the Third Person.

What we celebrate today, here at the end of the Easter season, has to do with the third person of the Blessed Trinity. The Holy Spirit and its coming upon the disciples gathered together in the upper room 50 days after the Resurrection. The wind blows through the room, tongues of fire appear above the heads of Mary and the apostles. Our parish icon there at the foot of the altar depicts that special moment.

And then Simon Peter, filled with that Holy Spirit, steps out onto the porch and preaches his first official Gospel message: Repent. Repent and be baptized. And his words were anointed. That is, they were empowered in such a way as to bear fruit, fruit that would last. And many did, in fact, heed his message that day and repented and were baptized. Through the mercy of God, the very same people that called for His crucifixion, now became the first Christians. Thus, it was the birthday of the Church. And incidentally, it's our feast day as well. Some of you present today were here over 40 years ago with Fr. Charlie Irvin, when our Church was given its new name: *The Church of the Holy Spirit*. It was tweaked somewhere along the line and we now call ourselves *Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Church*. Or just *Holy Spirit Catholic Church & School*.

Now I will be the first to admit that I have always found it difficult to relate to the Third Person. I have heard my fair share of homilies and lectures about the Holy Spirit – I've studied, read books and most importantly, I did live in Ann Arbor for much of my adult life. You may know that it is the home of an international Charismatic community. The Catholic Charismatic Movement had its beginnings there in Washtenaw county with groups like *The Word of God Community*, and the *Sword of the Spirit*. It was made up of both Catholics and Protestants, but they had a few things in common. They would call them the gifts of the Holy Spirit; speaking in tongues and words of knowledge or prophecy; being "slain in the spirit", robust singing with hands waving in the air and very large gatherings, singing in tongues with strange and mystical harmonies. And they prayed over people on a regular basis for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

I witnessed all these things and I was prayed over for the gifts many times, but to no avail. To this day I have not manifested any of those special charismatic signs that I have just referred to. Nevertheless, as I have come to understand and believe, the Spirit manifests itself in different ways with different people. The analogy used in scripture is that we are the body of Christ and every part is essential to the whole, and has its own gift. The hand is very talented at gripping. The arm is very good at throwing. The head is very good at thinking. The foot is very good at kicking. The mouth is very good for speaking. And so every individual is blessed with different types of gifts. Some dramatic, others more subtle. I always like to point out that the Holy Spirit made me a priest. But he did it kind of quietly.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in a person is marked by fruit. Words and actions that, well, make... a difference in the life of an individual, in the life of the world.

In preparation for this homily I decided to dig into my archives to hopefully find an old cassette by a Franciscan friar, Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa. He was the preacher to the papal household during the time of Pope John Paul. About 15 years back we were blessed here in the Diocese of Lansing to have Fr. Cantalamessa gave a talk to us priests out at Bethany house near Lansing. He was a very gentle spirit. Soft spoken, and what I remember most about his talk was that he opened up each of his lectures with a song. It's the ancient chant called the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, or *Come Creator Spirit*, which identifies God's creativity through the third person of the Trinity.

Last week we had the musical family called *Harpa Dei* projected up on the wall before Mass singing this song. It's also on our website. I would like to give it a try right here, just like Father did. I am singing off the top of today's parish bulletin..... It is a beautiful piece of music. Maybe our choir will perform it someday.

On this cassette I remember Father talking about two particular aspects of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Maybe even in the life of our community as well. He spoke of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. We know that throughout history individuals have been anointed with oil. And it's true of both our secular history as well as our religious history. Kings are frequently anointed with oil. When priests are ordained they are anointed with the Sacred Chrism. When priests are elevated to be bishops, they are anointed again. Next Thursday our young people will be anointed by the hands of Bishop Earl as they receive the sacrament of Confirmation. In Baptisms, little children are anointed with two different types of oil.

Anointing can then be understood literally and figuratively. Literally means the actual use of oil, whereas figuratively it means that the oil is not physical but spiritual. The Holy Spirit anoints certain individuals for certain tasks that may be temporary, or long-term. The results could again be subtle or they could be quite dramatic.

One person I think that is anointed is Fr. Raniero. Look him up on YouTube and you will see him preaching to very large gatherings of charismatics at various locations around the world. He speaks several languages. Maybe that is something like the original speaking in tongues when Peter and the Apostles preached to people from all around the world gathered there in Jerusalem on that Pentecost Sunday.

Another person that I think is dramatically anointed is Rabbi Jonathan Cahn. He is a messianic Jew who wrote the books called *The Harbinger*. A few years ago he made a presentation to a group of people underneath the dome of the capitol building in Washington DC. If you were to watch that video on YouTube, you might get the impression that he, too, is anointed – filled with the Spirit and, having an effect.

Lastly, another person who I think is anointed. Dallas Jenkins. The producer Director and writer of the Chosen series.

A few years ago we decided to pray a prayer after Mass, invoking the Holy Spirit upon this parish. It is back there on our walls and we now project it on the wall over here at the end of Mass. *Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and Kindle in them the fire of your love.*

Do you feel that Holy Spirit Church is anointed? From my perspective the answer is yes. Yes to the community, but maybe not to every individual. At least not yet.

Enjoying gifts of the Holy Spirit requires our cooperation. Therefore it is important for us to pray to the Holy Spirit not only as a community but as individuals. Come Holy Spirit into my life. Change me, mold me. Make me ever conformed to the image of God.

One last thing I would share with you that came from Fr. Raniero that day is that the essential identity of the Holy Spirit is the love that exists between the Father and the Son. So in the end, the Holy Spirit is the love of God.

Therefore, again I say, *Veni, Veni Spiritus*. That is, Come, Holy Spirit. Let your Love descend upon Holy Spirit Catholic Church.

+Fr. John