

ENCOURAGEMENT

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The Host Apostolate
www.thehostapostolate.org
14, Goatbeck Terrace,
Langley Moor,
County Durham,
DH7 8JJ
United Kingdom

Pentecost: *Inspiration and Challenge!*

How many of us today, if asked could name the gifts of the Holy Spirit or know what the fruits of Holy Spirit are? What about the special *charism*, such as Apostle, Teacher, Evangelist, Healer etc., It is true to say that perhaps we could all have some idea but could we go further and speak of the work of the Holy Spirit. In recent times the feast has lost some of its dignity and power to transform us like the original feast of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost (fiftieth day after Easter) did the Apostles in that upper Room. Frightened fearful, weak-kneed men and women, for there were disciples present too, all became wonderfully committed Christians ready to work by the inspiration of the same Spirit. This month starts with the Ascension of Jesus to his Father so that the Spirit of God can come as gift to all who receive Him. We were promised the Holy Spirit in many of the discourses that Jesus made after the Ascension. He made it clear that there is a unity of beings of Father, Son and Spirit and that it is through the Spirit that we understand this reality.

By Jesus' Resurrection we had life in abundance but the Holy Spirit enabled the followers, men and women to demonstrate the power of God through their daily lives by using the very gifts that were bestowed upon them. We receive the Holy Spirit many times in our lives in a special way in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation but in all Sacraments, the Spirit of God is the mover, the empowerer, the counsellor, the inspirer and peace bringer. Does the priest not 'hover' (Epiclesis) over the gifts of bread and wine to transform them into the Body and Blood of Jesus by the action of the Holy Spirit his special Gift.

It is so easy to 'nod' onto this without truly realising what is going on and that if we ask for these gifts of *Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude or Courage, Piety or Holiness, and Fear or Reverence of the Lord*.....

we will be given them for the special task that only we can accomplish. If we do use these gifts the results are the increases of the so called 'fruits' the consequences of our actions thus: *Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Benignity or kindness, Goodness, Longanimity or forbearance, Mildness, Faith, Modesty, Continency or self-restraint, and Chastity*. How often do we say 'oh I wish I was kinder or patient, joy filled or faithful', forgetting that these are gifts given freely but they are also the result of living out that call to be faith filled, and use the gifts that have been given to us.

But the Disciples also experienced gifts that we perhaps today would dismiss. They spoke in a way that was understood by many different cultures and languages. They made no exceptions to anyone who wished to hear the good news. They *themselves* were of different backgrounds and social positions. They healed, evangelised were courageous, longsuffering and prayerful. We think of the conversion of St Paul, a kind of blinding flash and smile thinking that that this kind of change does not happen today. We bow reverently at Mary's 'yes', she the 'Spouse of the Holy Spirit' and again do not think that our 'yes' to grace and gifts is also important.



So now to a true modern story: In 1970 a young newly ordained priest called Fr. Mathew N. was praying. He was a Vincentian priest but was not fully aware of the promise of the Holy Spirit. Early one morning quite unexpectedly he had an experience of God, a kind of Vision. Joy and Godly love poured into his entire being and within minutes he became a pillar of light. God had granted Fr. Mathew a baptism in the Holy Spirit, as he had promised his disciples. This brought about an inner transformation in the life of Fr. Mathew. He speaks of it like this..."I had gathered many hurts in my 23 years of life. I had a sensitive, no touch temperament, an inferiority complex, weak mindedness, fear of.... criticism sorrow and anxiety that gave me a negative outlook. Jesus touched and

Faith holds the wind of **The Holy Spirit** which fans the bonfire into flames. Servant of God. Catherine Doherty

healed me. Through the Holy Spirit I became a new creation and God granted me many graces. I began to laugh with joy and serve with love. My mind, once wracked with selfish and unholy thoughts began to pray for two to three hours with great concentration. The word of the Bible became relevant to my life and yes, my heart did burn on reading the scripture. Joyful truths that God is my loving Father, Jesus is my Saviour and The Holy Spirit is my guiding companion gave new meaning and purpose to my life.” Fr. Mathew was so inspired that he founded a Evangelising Community in India(Potta-Moringoor) which grew huge in a matter of nine year and flourishes to this day giving retreats in seven languages to which all are welcome, the broken hearted, addicts, the dispirited. Today the Community is so large it also has its own railway station, care home, college, a farm, food distribution and care for the young and elderly.

This is indeed a remarkable story but not as unusual as one would like to think. We all prefer the safety of our own sphere and are frightened of that deeper call and commitment. Yet every single day people are inspired by the action of the Holy Spirit and in their way perform extraordinary acts of forgiveness, charity, care, and love.

It would be very remiss of me not to mention how I came upon this story for it too signifies the Comforter the power of Him who makes all things clear and helps and consoles us. Feeling distinctly unwell and struggling with cancer treatment I knew that I had a few tasks to accomplish, Encouragement being one. I had it in my heart to speak of the Holy Spirit but felt ‘dry’ and weak. A friend called round one evening and almost nonchalantly gave me a little leaflet with little comment. I thanked her and when she left, I read it. My prayer was answered. We are all touched by the Holy Spirit every day of our lives.

As we approach this wonderful feast we could perhaps prepare for it in a special way this year. From the feast of the Ascension either Thursday or Sunday, we should call upon the Holy Spirit to visit us with grace. It is customary to make a novena to the Holy Spirit. You may wish to make a special intention for help with whatever you are doing or a grace that you need at this time. There are many such novenas and it is not difficult to find one, however our own words often suffice or ones which we all know.’ *‘Come, Oh Holy Spirit and fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle them with the fire of your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created and You shall renew the face of the earth’.* This is a good prayer for Peace in our troubled world. But we should also go a little further. St Peter reminded us of the words taken from the

prophet Joel from the Old Testament’ ‘In the last days’ God said ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people’ St. Peter explained that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all those who turn away from sin and turned to God through Jesus. The coming of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament showed a change of emphasis from being made manifest to ‘Priest, Prophets and Kings’ to all people regardless of their social position, age or gender. In this way we all become priests, prophets and kings through Baptism. Although we will all be called to serve in different ways every person’s call is important and unique. Each person is called to contribute to the health and mission of the Church.

Each of us has to ask ourselves this question therefore. Am I using all my spiritual gifts to serve Gods people? Am I enthusiastic about the way I serve? Do I recognise the action of The Holy Spirit in my life? Am I open to those promptings? Pentecost is a time of renewal and fervour, asking to be filled with the Holy Spirit to better love and serve each other. H.H.

Pope Francis 1 Rome. Casa Marta.

‘What kind of heart do we have? Is it a fickle heart which, like a dancer, like a butterfly flits from one to another?’ Or “is it a heart fixed on the Holy Spirit?” the Pope asked during his homily. Turning to the Gospel, the Pope drew attention to how Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, “will teach us all things” and will “remind us of everything.” In addition to doing these two things, Pope Francis noted that the Holy Spirit also “gives us strength, gives us this steadiness to be able to move forward in life in the midst of many events.” Is it a heart that is scared by the vicissitudes of life and is hiding and afraid to give witness to Jesus Christ? “Is my heart fixed upon creatures, the problems that we all have? Is my heart fixed upon everyday gods? Or is it a heart fixed on the Holy Spirit?”

19.05.2014

Thank you, Holy Spirit, for Your presence with me, flowing freely in me and through me. Thank you for being my friend, my teacher, my comforter, my counsellor, my intercessor, and the giver of extravagant gifts.

Sunday Feasts in June

1st The Ascension, 8th Pentecost
 15th Trinity, 29th Sts. Peter and Paul .
Others: 3rd St Charles Lwanga 13th St Anthony of Padua.
 27th Sacred Heart 28th Immaculate Heart of Mary.

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