

Today the Christian world celebrates one of the most important events of our Christian faith: the coming of the Holy Spirit. With that moment the world was moved into a new age, the last of the ages. For Christians, this age is one in which we rejoice for "the Kingdom is at hand!"

Today, in this country, we also celebrate Mothers' Day. It is difficult and it would be wrong to ignore Pentecost for the sake of Mothers' Day, but perhaps Mothers' Day might provide some insight into the workings of the Holy Spirit.

St Luke the author of the Book of Acts tells us in a preceding chapter that gathered in prayer after the Ascension was the remaining eleven apostles and he adds "together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers." The mention of the presence of Mary is significant, for Luke has not mentioned Mary by name since the infancy story.

Mary had already had an experience of the Holy Spirit. Luke's Gospel says that the angel told Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." Just as the presence of the Holy Spirit led to the birth of the Messiah, Mary was once more present when the coming of the Holy Spirit led to the birth of the Church.

Many years ago the Church changed the title of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity from Holy Ghost to Holy Spirit to better explain the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit is no ghost. Genesis tells us that God brought Adam to life by breathing into his nostrils. God's breath in Hebrew was called ruah, (ru AH) which can be

translated as "wind." Acts describes the experience of those gathered: "...suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind." This "wind" was God's breath, breathing new life into the world.

The word spirit comes from the Latin spiritus, breath, and spirare, (spir ra ray) to blow. "Spirit" captures this sense of the breath of God far better than "Ghost"!

God's breath, once more came into the world on Pentecost, and with this new life came new gifts for the building up of the Kingdom of God. Calling to mind Mothers' Day, we can be mindful how a mother sees in her children certain gifts and abilities. Mothers typically push their children to use their gifts, to practice their gifts, and promote their children because of their gifts. Certainly Mary was no different in encouraging Jesus and promoting Him. Mary's exposing Jesus at the Wedding Feast of Cana is partially a story of Mary fulfilling the Jewish requirements of a mother to work to increase the honor of her family.

With this knowledge of mothers, perhaps we should remind ourselves of the gifts we have all received from the Holy Spirit, the traditional Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which come to us from Isaiah 11:2-3, which Isaiah said would be present in the Messiah to come and now have been extended to us through the Holy Spirit.

I won't put anyone on the spot and ask them to name the gifts of the Spirit, but because this is Pentecost it may be a good time to review them.

- **The gift of wisdom makes us relish and love only the things of heaven. It is the gift of choosing God and the way of God above all other things.**
- **The gift of understanding helps us to grasp the truths of our faith. It helps us with insight into the Scriptures and doctrines of the Church, which are themselves, from the gift of understanding.**
- **The gift of counsel (prudence) enables us to see and choose correctly those things that help to give glory to God. It helps us separate good from evil.**
- **Fortitude is a gift of courage to help us overcome the obstacles and difficulties that arise from the practice of our faith. Being a person of faith one who openly lives faith is not always easy. The values of our faith are not always shared by the majority.**
- **Knowledge helps us know the right path to follow and the dangers to avoid in our journey to heaven. It enables us to possess the vision of the Kingdom and helps us stay on the proper course.**
- **The gift of piety, sometimes best understood as "godliness," is a confidence in God that leads us to live a Christ like life.**
- **And, finally, fear of the Lord is a gift of respect for God. "Fear" means that we so respect God we become afraid, not of God, but of offending God. We're not afraid of what God will do to us, we are afraid of disappointing God. When we love someone, we always fear hurting the person.**

These gifts are for us as individuals. If we use them, if we cooperate with them, they become gifts for the entire community of faith, then Jesus' prayer that we may be one as He and the Father are one will be answered.

We all enjoy a pat on the back and little encouraging words. Jesus is giving His early Church more than a pat, but a boot in the backside, Jesus did not give them any further instruction except to "Go". The same Spirit is doing the same kicking to the same area of our Church and our individual selves.

Where shall we go? Where is the chaos? Where do others not want to go? Where are we likely to bring light and life? Where is the need for ministry in our families, communities, and cultures in our own parish of Assumption BVM? These are all hard questions, but there is another one and that is "who should do these things?" The answer is in the second reading. "To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit", we are all called to GO!

This is not exactly a comforting feast. This celebration has serious, going out, implications. The Spirit is not a warm and fuzzy consoler like a fluffy blanket. It says to each of us, "Take your life as seriously as I do!" Hiding is not allowed any more No more serious sitting around and worrying or wondering who we are and what are we to do. If you were baptized you were baptized into one body with Christ. Now is the time to use the gifts the Spirit has given you. I would love to hear where the Spirit is leading you.