

Homily: Pentecost Sunday 2023: Cycle A: Acts 2: 1-11; Ps. 104; 1 Corth 12: 3b-7, 12-13;
Jn 20: 19-23

“The Holy Spirit: The Sanctifier”

Today is the birthday of the Catholic Church, the completion of Jesus’s mission on earth when He sends the promised Holy Spirit to the Apostles and to all of us through them. The Holy Spirit is the one to lead the Church into all **Truth**, the saving truth that will lead each of us to Heaven - if embraced in love and lived out in our daily lives.

1. **The Holy Spirit goes out to all people with His grace, in order to draw us to Christ.** He is a gentle spirit who so often works in the quiet, and moments of reflection in our lives, especially when we go through suffering - which is the mystery of the Cross. It is in those moments that the Holy Spirit shows us that it is only in a personal relationship with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit that ultimate meaning and purpose will come into our lives and fill that inner void in our hearts. Remember the Cross will truly lead to the glory of the Resurrection- if we embrace it in union with Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.
2. **The Holy Spirit also tries to get us to see increasingly over time that Jesus alone is the Savior of the human race and that we need to draw close to Jesus in daily life in order to benefit from the fruit of His Cross and Resurrection which is redemption - a new start with God.** He makes present the mystery of Christ, especially in the Sacraments: *the beginning of new divine life in Baptism; forgiveness and healing in the Sacrament of Reconciliation; reception of the very Body and Blood of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist; a deepening of His gifts and seal of Divine strength in the Sacrament of Confirmation; a special blessing of love and assistance in the Sacrament of Marriage - so that the love of a man and woman can reflect the love of God in their family life; conformity of a man to Christ the Priest and Victim in the Sacrament of Orders; and finally He gives us inner peace and healing of soul and sometimes body in the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.* The Holy Spirit truly wants to manifest the risen Lord Jesus to us: to help us daily to recall the saving Words of Jesus in the Gospel and open

our minds and hearts to the understanding of Jesus's Death and Resurrection.

Please draw close to the Holy Spirit in prayer, and He will lead you to the heart of Christ who leads us to our Heavenly Father. It is so true! What a divine gift!

3. **Finally the Holy Spirit wants to help us live the new life Christ won for us.** In addition to the actual graces of the Sacraments, He also gives us 7 special gifts in our **Baptism**, which are renewed and deepened in our **Confirmation**. The gifts of *wisdom, understanding, knowledge, fear of the Lord, piety, counsel and fortitude* are like sails that lead us to the port of Heaven - if we cooperate with Him. Also, we need to be open to **His daily inspirations:** to do good and avoid evil, and to love like Christ - by making of our lives a **self-gift** to Father through Christ in the power of the same Holy Spirit. As St. Paul puts it so well in my favorite Scripture quote from **Romans 12: 1-2:** *“And now, brothers and sisters, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies (your lives) as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship. DO NOT conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect.”* This doesn't happen automatically, as we well know; in fact, our fallen nature sadly sometimes rebels against the Holy Spirit, often without realizing it - in our dullness and hardness of heart. We have to **be open** to the Holy Spirit descending on each one of us in a tongue of spiritual flame. Daily prayer and penance and the regular reception of the Sacrament of Confession makes us more open and sensitive to His sanctifying presence as the readings at Mass remind us today. The Holy Spirit wants to transform each of us as individuals, which then leads to the transformation of the entire Mystical Body of the Church in holiness. **Let's also ask daily for the gift of a deeper Faith.** For as St. Hilary, one of the great writers of the early Church, put it so well, *“Unless the human soul absorbs the gift of the Holy Spirit through faith, the human mind has the ability to know God but lacks the light necessary for that knowledge”* (see the Liturgy of the Hours, Vol. 2, p.998, *“The Father's Gift in Christ”*). By grace, may we be truly ever more docile/open to the Holy Spirit in our lives. ***Come Holy Spirit; Come and transform us!*** God bless you.