

THE PASTOR'S DESK

May 23, 2010 - The Holy Spirit



Dear Parishioners,

There are a couple of things I want to talk about on this Feast of Pentecost. The first is about the Mother of God Community. This Vigil of Pentecost, Bishop Knestout is here to celebrate Mass but also to mark the inclusion of the Mother of God Community into the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships. This group is under the direction of the Vatican's Congregation for the Laity. This is an important step for the Community in that it is now under the umbrella of the Holy Father in a formal way.

This new relationship will strengthen the Community in many ways. We, as the parish of St. John Neumann, also welcome this development. Many of our parishioners are (or were) members of the Community. I know that the Community itself has had difficulties. But, my experience has been very positive with so many of the members of the Community being active in the parish. While carefully maintaining the respective identities of the Parish and the Community, we can look forward to spiritual benefits for both in the future.

Second, I want to say something about this Feast of Pentecost. Of course, this Feast is centered on the event of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles and the Blessed Mother in the Upper Room. It was at this time that the Apostles began their ministry of preaching the Gospel to the entire world. It was at this moment that the Church was born.

The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church. Just as every living organism has a soul, so the Church also has a soul. The soul is the principle of life, unity, and activity in a single, living organism. The soul is what holds the organism together. *Without* the soul, the organism disintegrates back into its elements. *With* a soul it grows, acts, and is held together. What a soul does for a living organism, the Holy Spirit does for the Church. By keeping us one in faith, hope, and love, the Holy Spirit unites the individual members of the Church. By guiding the Magisterium (the teaching authority of the Church) it ensures the integrity of the content of the faith. By guiding the hierarchy (the Pope and Bishops in union with him) the Holy Spirit maintains the Traditions of the Church. By sustaining the traditions (literally, what is "handed over"), the Holy Spirit keeps the Church unified throughout time until the coming of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit also makes the sacraments effective in communicating grace. Sacramental grace is what conforms each member of the Church to the person of Christ and what forms the Church as a whole into the Body of Christ. The Sacraments also bring the Church into the relationship of love between the Father and the Son.

Of course, all explanations and accounts of God and, particularly, of the Holy Spirit, fall woefully short of the reality. "The Spirit blows where it will". Therefore, we cannot limit the actions of the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit is also the principle and insurer of the unity of the Church.

When discerning whether the Holy Spirit is at work in any person or group, the Church always looks for certain signs: orthodoxy, humility, and unity. These signs correspond to the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity: orthodoxy is the correct expression of faith, humility is the expression of hope in that humility trusts in God's providence, and the effect of charity is unity.

May all of us know the gifts of the Holy Spirit and live them out in faith, hope, and charity that the Church may be for the entire world a sacrament of God's love.

Pentecost also ends the Easter Season. May the grace of Christ Risen from the Dead and Ascended to Glory be with us throughout the year and even unto Eternal Life.

**God bless,
Fr. LaHood**

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SJN 32nd Anniversary

Our traditional Picnic will be held on June 13 from 12:30 pm until 5:00 pm. on the grounds of Mother of God School. We need Coordinators, volunteers and bakers to make this event a success. Please sign-up in the church foyer. Discount tickets for the meal will be on sale in the church foyer on weekends. SJN hats, tickets for extra drinks, snow cones, funnel cakes, as well as tickets for special games like BINGO, cake wheel will also be available for purchase.

For more information, please contact Michael May (picnic coordinator) at mikethenight@verizon.net or at 301-253-6701, Mary Busche (games) at 301-482-2491 or Mike York (games) at 301-368-9013.