

Pentecost Sunday...
and the sacrament of the present moment

The Readings: <http://cms.usccb.org/bible/readings/053120-day.cfm>

Well, here we are - Pentecost Sunday 2020.

The last day of the Easter season.

Now it's on to Ordinary Time.

Yeah, don't we wish that everything can return to the ordinary; to the normal?

We so want to take back control of our lives again.

But wait. We never did have control, did we?

As much as we struggle and grasp and clutch to this fictitious state of mind, deep down, our faith and reason tells us that we really have no control at all. It's our Creator who holds the power and the control - over everything.

It's been so enjoyable and interesting greeting the Blessed Sacrament parishioners as they come into the church for Mass. People look different with their masks on - like semi-incognito.

Most everyone has a look of quiet anticipation. And I sense a silent joyfulness because they are about to enter into the Sacrifice of the Mass and receive Jesus in Holy Communion. It's almost as if they can't quite believe that they are back at Mass after such a long period of sacramental fasting. I can sense their anticipation for what's to come when they enter the church.

But some of you have also expressed how strange life has been in these past few months. Some have expressed strong emotions, “this has all been so horrible, just terrible”!

Last week in his homily Fr. Jeff talked about how the disciples have entered an awkward time of transition as Jesus ascends to his heavenly Father. They must now wait anxiously and with faith for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They too are experiencing that same loss of control. They want to do something, but they must simply wait on God.

I just watched a short video that was recorded by Dr. Jim Langley who is the Executive Director of St. Raphael Counseling here in the Archdiocese. The theme of his short talk was “A Reflection on the Sacrament of the Present Moment”. Dr. Jim talked about how much we want control over our lives. We are all control freaks to one extent or another.

And yet it is in these very times of our life, these times of confusion and frustration that it is so important to practice being fully engaged in the present moment. So rather than becoming addicted to worry and fear and what we can't control, we can and should give our complete self to our spouse, our children, our jobs, even our mundane daily chores around the house. We can't handle all that is happening in our world, but what we can handle is what's going on right now. God meets us in these present moments.

It was actually a French priest, Fr. Jean-Pierre de Caussade, who coined the term, “sacrament of the present moment”. He encourages us to, “embrace the present moment as an ever-flowing source of holiness”. Let that sink in for a bit...

What Fr. Jean Pierre is saying is that our Lord turns the normal realities of life into vehicles of grace. He goes on to write, “If we could lift the veil and if we watched with vigilant attention, God would endlessly reveal himself to us and we should see and rejoice in his active presence in all that befalls us. At every moment we should exclaim: ‘It is the Lord’.”

It is this kind of engagement that I have witnessed in the parishioners at Mass. They take nothing for granted any more. No one knows when they will get to come to Mass again and receive the Eucharist. They relish the moment.

It is in the present moment that the disciples also find themselves right now on the day of Pentecost. Our first reading from Acts begins, “When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled...” yes, the time is now - the perfect time.

Mary and the disciples were gathered together in the large room. St. Luke tells us there were 120 of them. They have spent this time of waiting in deep prayer. Their prayer for the Holy Spirit was vital preparation for their witness to Jesus’ resurrection and for the birth of the Church. They are ready.

Suddenly a strong wind hits them; tongues of fire rest on each of them; and they are filled with the Holy Spirit. And the power of the Holy Spirit allows them to speak in many different languages.

The Church on earth has been born and is ready to go out and witness to the ends of the earth. Jesus gives them his Spirit so that they can carry on his work everywhere, in all languages, to all peoples.

The disciples are so engaged, so completely filled with the love of the Holy Spirit that there is no more room for fear, or doubt, or confusion. Their future and their mission is completely clear to them now. They are absorbed by God's love and in sharing the story of Jesus' death and resurrection with everyone else. Their entire being has been united in Christ's love for mankind.

They now clearly understand God's saving plan and are able to proclaim it boldly, even at the cost of beatings, imprisonment, and martyrdom. They are filled with joy and continual praise, even in the face of persecution.

The Pentecost event reminds us how indispensable the Holy Spirit is to our faith and salvation. The indwelling Holy Spirit bestows on us the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, from which all other Christian virtues and actions follow. The Spirit produces the character of Jesus in us. This unique gift is offered in its fullness to everyone but is given to each in proportion to one's readiness to receive it.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit must constantly be activated and nurtured by frequent reception of the sacraments and by prayer. We must ASK for the gifts of the Holy Spirit in prayer. When Jesus was telling the disciples that he must go to his Father, he told them they will be given the Advocate and Counselor who will guide them into all truth.

When we receive the Holy Spirit in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, our entire being and purpose coalesce around the love of Christ and our mission for him and his Church.

Pentecost is realized in every moment of every day. This is our sacrament of the present moment, to be always united with Christ and his love.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!