

Dear Friends in Christ,

The Easter season is such a rich season for us because the Church, in her wisdom, has been preparing us for the great feast of Pentecost, only a couple weeks away. During the last six Sundays, the second reading has been taken from the first Letter of St. John. Most of what we hear about in John's letter is love, love and more love! We wonder if that is all John can talk about. For John, love is the power that will overcome evil in the world; that is why he talks about it so much:

“Whoever keeps God’s word, the love of God is truly perfected in him.” (2:5)

“See what love the Father has bestowed on us...” (3:1)

“Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.” (3:18)

“Beloved, let us love one another.” (4:7)

“If we love one another, God remains in us.” (4:12)

In the gospels during the Easter season, we have heard how Jesus embodied love and instructed us to go out and embody that love to the world:

“As the Father has sent me so I send you.” (Jn. 20:21)

“I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (Jn. 10:11)

“I am the true vine...Remain in me as I remain in you.” (Jn. 15:1, 4)

“Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.”(Jn. 15:5)

“This I command you: love one another.” (Jn. 15:17)

When the feast of Pentecost arrives, we no longer read from the first Letter of St. John. The love that was so prevalent in the readings during the Easter season is now brought to reality in the Holy Spirit—LOVE itself. If we have been listening carefully during the Easter season, the Holy Spirit is mentioned frequently, preparing us for the great feast of Pentecost:

“The Spirit is the one that testifies and the Spirit is truth.” (1Jn. 5:6)

“He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’.” (Jn. 20:22)

“The church was being built up...and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers. (Acts 9:31)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...” (Acts 1:8)

“This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit. (1Jn. 4:13)

With the approach of Pentecost, let us open our hearts in gratitude that this God of ours has graciously and so abundantly given us from the fountain of God's love—the Spirit dwelling within us.

The following prayer to the Holy Spirit is one of my favorites. I invite you to use it in your prayer these next couple of weeks in preparation for Pentecost asking the Spirit to set our hearts on fire with love.

Come Holy Spirit, enkindle the Fire of Your Love. Transform all that is fearful into boldness of heart. Inspire Your servant with Wonder and Awe at the Mystery of Your Presence. Confirm Your friend in Compassion and Forgiveness. Whisper Discernment in the midst of confusion; be Wisdom in time of trouble; Reverence in the face of diversity; Patience with the unfolding of life and forever anoint Your messenger with Joy. (Pat Bergen, csj)

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