

## **SCREEN: Congratulations!**

Graduations this year were unlike any before.

Because the big day couldn't be celebrated with physical gatherings, graduation events moved online to Zoom and Google and social media.

Very different and kind of sad.

Students spent months....years...looking forward to this moment, expecting it to look one way, only to find it looking completely different.

I think we all feel their pain and disappointment.

To try to soften the hurt, some big name celebrities shared messages with the graduates.

Having watched parts of these, I can say that the common theme went something like this:

*"Dear graduates,*

*over the years you've learned a lot and discovered your gifts and talents.*

*Times are tough right now, but you've faced tough times before.*

*And even though I can't tell you what the future will be, you are ready for this moment!"*

A commencement speech is essentially a pep talk to encourage the graduates, and to calm their fears and doubts about the uncertainties awaiting them.

## **SCREEN: Sent main screen**

We've come to the final week of our message series titled, **Sent**.

And we end with a big celebration, Pentecost.

I like to think of Pentecost as 'graduation day' for the Apostles.

They had lots of fears and doubts -

they had uncertainties about the future.

So Jesus, their teacher, gave them one final lesson and a graduation gift to help them.

He gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now, before diving into the readings,  
let's remember how the Apostles got to their 'big day'.  
We've been journeying with them for two months now.  
We've felt their hurts, we've shared in their disappointment,  
but we've also seen how God did stepped into their pain and  
led them forward.

We've discovered that God had a plan -  
a plan for His Son and His followers -  
but also a plan for us and the world.

And God's plan was truly a game changer.

Last week at the Ascension, before returning to heaven,  
Jesus gave his followers the Great Commission.

He told them to *'go make disciples of all nations.'*

That was 'PLAN A', remember?

Jesus was counting on them to go tell others who would tell others  
and eventually everyone would know he is the messiah.

But Jesus knew they'd need help to carry out this mission.

Help arrived ten days later on Pentecost.

So now that we're caught up, let's turn to today's first reading.

The disciples were all gathered together in Jerusalem...

*then suddenly there came from the sky*

*a noise like a strong driving wind,*

*and it filled the entire house in which they were.*

*Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,*

*which parted and came to rest on each one of them.*

**SCREEN: And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit  
and began to speak in different tongues,  
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. -Acts 2: 4**

This sounds so incredible, that it's hard to picture.

But what happened next was even more amazing.

The streets of Jerusalem were filled with people from all over -

from as far away as Rome.

The Holy Spirit sent the disciples out into the streets  
to tell everybody about Jesus.

And each visitor heard the Good News in their own language.

If today's reading had continued on we'd have heard that  
Peter preached to the crowd and that 3000 people stepped forward  
to be baptized: the Church was born!

All because Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and  
because the disciples were open to the promptings of the Spirit.

As they began to fulfill their mission, each disciple discovered  
that they'd been given special gifts.

St. Paul wrote about this in today's second reading:

**SCREEN: To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit  
is given for some benefit. - 1 Corinthians 12**

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit for some benefit.

First, for the salvation of the individual receiving it.

But it can't remain there...

it's not a gift to keep to oneself.

In order for the true benefit to be fully manifested the gift has to be  
given away - it has to be shared with others.

And when it is given away and shared, disciples are made and  
the Kingdom of God grows.

Thankfully on Pentecost, the disciples realized this.

It had to be tempting for them to remain in the Upper Room.

It had been their home for two months so it was comfortable and safe and known.

While the world beyond their door was chaotic, noisy, even dangerous.

But that's where the Spirit sent them, so that's where they went.

They stepped through the door,  
they ventured out into the uncertainty,  
and found out something great:

they discovered they'd received other gifts from the Spirit

to help them lead others to Christ's Kingdom.

They could preach and teach, they could heal and lead.

This Pentecost, we not only recall their 'big day'

it's our's too.

You and I received the same Holy Spirit as the Apostles -

no more or less.

And just like for the first followers of Jesus,

the Holy Spirit has given us gifts to fulfill our mission.

Maybe you're not sure you have any gifts.

Let me assure you, you definitely do -

every baptized person receives the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

But there are also individual gifts, called charisms,

which can be unique to each person.

And there are many charisms, some lists contain as many as two dozen

and they run the gamut from preaching and teaching, to healing and leading.

**SCREEN: encouragement**

I want to mention two charisms that you probably have

and which are really needed right now.

The first one is encouragement.

With the pandemic having turned life upside down,

everybody I know - *myself included* -

is experiencing moments of frustration.

Maybe you were working online and lost your internet connection

at a critical moment.

Maybe your child's school assignment stressed you out.

Maybe you just woke up one morning with

an overwhelming sense of dread - *I've been there!*

So many people need encouragement right now and you can give it.

The best way to use this charism is for you to

reach out to the people in your life.

Send an email a text or letter and follow up with a phone call.

Just start by saying,

*You've been on my mind, how are you?*

Then listen to their answer and offer encouragement.

I said this before, but it bears repeating:

you don't have to fix everything that is broken or not working - you can't, *I can't*.

Just reach out, listen and offer encouragement.

### **SCREEN: Let's Make a Deal main screen**

Here's another way you encourage someone who's struggling.

Next week we're beginning a brand new message series titled, *Let's Make A Deal*.

It's what I'd call a 'back to basics' series because

for four weeks we're going to tackle the hard questions

so many people are asking right now.

Questions like, "*Who is God?*"

*"What does God want FROM me and FOR me?"* And

*"Why should I believe in faith or religion?"*

If you know anyone asking those questions,

invite them, encourage them to check us out.

### **SCREEN: service**

The other charism I'll mention is service.

And here's what I mean by service:

service is seeing an unmet need - a gap that needs filling -

and then **you** step in and meet the need; **you** fill the gap.

Service can be helping a coworker who's overwhelmed.

Or helping out at home so mom or dad get a break.

Service is reading about a need in our bulletin and volunteering.

I guarantee that if you keep your eyes open throughout the day,

you will find plenty of ways to serve.

So encouragement and service.

Two charisms you probably have and can share now.

### **SCREEN: [spxbowie.org/sent](http://spxbowie.org/sent)**

If you are wondering what other charisms you have,  
*I encourage you* to go to our website where you'll find  
a description of 24 charisms.

Take a look to see which one's describe your gifts.

Before I end, let me say this one last thing.

The gifts and charisms God has given you  
are meant to be shared, not kept to yourself.

You have been 'given', to share - you 'get' in order to give.

And now is a pivotal time to step up.

This Pentecost of 2020 is unlike any we've seen before.

The Church is being asked to "be church" in new ways.

But there is no need to be afraid because we're not alone:

Christ is with us.

His Holy Spirit promises to guide us, always.

If we remember the Great Commission

an use our gifts and charisms,

the Church will be renewed in unimaginable ways.

Let us commit to 'go make disciples' and never forget that we have been sent. Amen. +