



Homily for 6/9/2019

Pentecost, Year C

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*The Spirit of a Family*

Happy Pentecost! This is traditionally called the “Birthday of the Church”. This is the feast day when the “life breath” of the Holy Spirit was poured down upon the bride of Christ, the Church, just like the Spirit was breathed into Eve in the beginning. Through this Holy Spirit, given to us at Baptism and completed at Confirmation, human beings are “born again”. So, if anyone ever asks you if you have been “born again,” you can say, “yes, absolutely!”

Now we have lots of baptisms here at Sts. Peter and Paul, because we have lots of babies born in our parish! Of course, whenever you have a newborn baby, everyone tries to figure out which parent the baby favors. “He has his mother’s eyes.” “She has her father’s nose,” etc. This only multiplies as the child grows and the child takes on more and more of the characteristics of his parents. I remember one moment when I was a teenager I answered the phone. My grandparents were calling and they thought I was my dad just from the sound of my voice. Think about that - my dad’s parents couldn’t even tell the difference between our voices! Even just yesterday at the reception of now Fr. Mark Schuster’s ordination, I sat with my dad and people remarked how much we look alike, minus the red hair, of course! Now as the child grows, he also picks up various other traits from his parents by way of mannerisms.

“She walks like her mother.” “He scratches his head just like his dad.”. I remember one time talking with my sister when she was disciplining her children when they had misbehaved, and I said, “You sound just like mom!” She did not appreciate the comparison! But there is a truth in it. We are made in the image and likeness of our progenitors, whether we like it or not. There are of course many reasons why this is so, some from nature and others from nurture. But the upshot is, no matter what, we are the children of our parents.

This is what makes the passage in Genesis Chapter 1 so profound when we read that God made mankind “in His own Image and after His own likeness.” God has made us His sons and daughters by breathing His Spirit into humanity.

When God’s Spirit animates us we are made like Him. What are the mannerisms of God that we are supposed to be imitating? St. Paul lists them in Galatians 5 when he says, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

When we manifest these traits, we are being most like God. But the image and likeness of God in us has suffered because of the rebellion of sin.

Original sin is our rebellion against our nature as beloved sons and daughters of God. It is also a rebellion against those mannerisms that show we were formed by Him. When we rebel against God’s Spirit living within us, we turn to the flesh, to our carnal side.

Again, St. Paul in Galatians 5: “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like.”



Now, if we were to examine those two lists, I would ask you two things:

- 1) Which list contains the things you want?
- 2) Which list describes how things actually are in your life?

Be honest. Sometimes we like to hide the truth from ourselves and think more highly of our own virtue than what is true. Which of those fruits of the Spirit is lacking? Which of those works of the flesh has got ahold of you? We sometimes have a little too much pride in our virtues and not enough humility to acknowledge our shortcomings. We might want to exalt ourselves by being abstemious but bear hatred in our hearts for those who indulge. We might tout our very refined self-control but utterly lack joy or gentleness towards those whose faith is weaker.

I am also tempted to say that the first question, “Which is the list of things you want?”, should be a rhetorical question - with the obvious answer being the list of the Fruits of the Spirit. But “the proof is in the pudding,” as they say, and “where our money is, there our heart is also.” Most of our entertainment, news media, Facebook and Twitter feeds tell a different story than the supposed answer to our rhetorical question. The amount of time, money and energy spent on the things in the second list, the works of the flesh, belie the fact that we are addicted to the flesh.

Even when we think that we are fighting for a good cause, we often fight dirty, letting anger rule our hearts. We need to be careful when stepping onto the “high horse” of righteousness, lest our pride be our downfall allowing immorality, licentiousness, greed, envy, hatred and division to rule instead of kindness, generosity, gentleness and self-control. Take any issue of the day: immigration, homosexuality, abortion, death penalty, racism, sexism, and many more; one can easily see that there is very little civil debate. In these conversations, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control usually take a back-seat, and impurity, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, wrath, selfishness, factions and envy take front and center.

God knows this. It is the reason He sent His only-Begotten Son into the World. It is the reason he was crucified on Calvary Hill, died, and on the third day arose from the dead. It is the reason God sent His Holy Spirit once again upon His chosen new creation, the Church. St. Paul, a third time, says, “Now those who belong to Christ [Jesus] have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.”

Today we celebrate our Spiritual Adoption through the Gift of the Holy Spirit. We are adopted into God’s family and we are called to take on the mannerisms of God. There is a right way to fight in this world. And there is a wrong way. A true and authentic Christian response to the world will contain love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Wouldn’t it be great if someone were to come to this parish and remark, “They really are their Heavenly Father’s child”? Or, “That parishioner acts just like God.” “They will know you are Christians by your love.” “If you love me, keep my commandments.” “Love one another, even as I have loved you.”

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations, Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.