



Homily for 5/23/2021

Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

Pentecost

Everyone knows the devastating effects of a drought. Without water, things begin to die that once were living, and things that have been planted have no hope of springing forth and bearing fruit.

The human body is the same. Without food, the human body can last weeks, if not months (it depends on your store of fat.) But if you take away water, the human body can only last days.

In fact, as dehydration sets in, the body starts to go haywire. Chronic dehydration happens when the body is habitually deprived of the water it needs. This has been shown to lead to disastrous health consequences. Conversely, simply drinking enough water each day has been shown to have amazing health benefits.

The soul, like the earth and like the body, is the same. The soul needs its own nourishment and spiritual water supply in order to survive and thrive.

St. Irenaeus preached in this same way in his treatise against heresies, focusing on the image of the Holy Spirit as water:

**From the treatise *Against Heresies* by Saint Irenaeus, bishop**

(Lib. 3, 17. 1-3: SC 34, 302-306)

“Like dry flour, which cannot become one lump of dough, one loaf of bread, without moisture, we who are many, could not become one in Christ Jesus without the water that comes down from heaven. And like parched ground, which yields no harvest unless it receives moisture, we who were once like a waterless tree could never have lived and borne fruit without this abundant rainfall from above. Through the baptism that liberates us from change and decay we have become one in body; through the Spirit we have become one in soul.”

So, the Holy Spirit is like the water that makes our cells function in the body. The soul is watered by God’s Spirit to make it alive. But the reality is that we are very often remaining in a dehydrated state on the spiritual level.

St. Irenaeus speaks to us to the necessity of the Holy Spirit by saying, “If we are not to be scorched and made unfruitful, we need the dew of God.”

In a like manner, the Holy Spirit becomes that which is necessary for all our spiritual senses to thrive. This theme is taken up by St. Hilary when he said,

**From the treatise *On the Trinity* by Saint Hilary, bishop**

(Lib. 2, 1, 33. 35: PL 10, 50-51. 73-75)

“We receive the Spirit of truth so that we can know the things of God. In order to grasp this, consider how useless the faculties of the human body would become if they were denied their exercise. Our eyes cannot fulfill their task without light, either natural or artificial; our ears cannot react without sound vibrations, and in the absence of any odor our nostrils are ignorant of their function. Not that these senses would lose their own nature if they were not used; rather, they demand objects of experience in order to function. It is the same with the human soul. Unless it absorbs the gift of the Spirit through faith, the mind has the ability to know God but lacks the light necessary for that knowledge.”

The Holy Spirit, then, is the light of God. He is the sound of God. He is the fragrance of God. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot experience God in the spiritual sense. Without these attributes we cannot live the holiness we have



been made for. Without the Holy Spirit we are like people with eyes, but in a cave with no light. We are like people with ears in a dead space with no reverberance. We are like people who have noses but with no incense to smell, sterilized and flavorless. Without the Holy Spirit we are like a dry weary land without water.

We need the Holy Spirit to flood us with water from above, enlighten us with uncreated light and to give us what we need to hear the voice of God and experience God's sweet fragrance.

St. Hilary again says, "This unique gift which is in Christ is offered in its fullness to everyone. It is everywhere available, but it is given to each man in proportion to his readiness to receive it. Its presence is the fuller, the greater a man's desire to be worthy of it."

The gift is offered but it must be desired and received. We must constantly beg God for the outpouring of this gift. This is what the beautiful Sequence for today's mass gives us. The *Veni Sancte Spiritus* is a model of prayer and desire for the Holy Spirit.

### Veni, Sancte Spiritus

Come, Holy Spirit, come!  
And from your celestial home  
Shed a ray of light divine!  
Come, Father of the poor!  
Come, Source of all our store!  
Come, within our bosoms shine!  
You, of comforters the best;  
You, the soul's most welcome Guest;  
Sweet refreshment here below;  
In our labor, rest most sweet;  
Grateful coolness in the heat;  
Solace in the midst of woe.  
O most blessed Light divine,  
Shine within these hearts of Thine,  
And our inmost being fill!  
Where you are not, we have naught,  
Nothing good in deed or thought,  
Nothing free from taint of ill.  
Heal our wounds, our strength renew;  
On our dryness pour your dew;  
Wash the stains of guilt away;  
Bend the stubborn heart and will;  
Melt the frozen, warm the chill;  
Guide the steps that go astray.  
On the faithful, who adore  
And confess you, evermore  
In your sevenfold gift descend;  
Give them virtue's sure reward  
Give them your salvation, Lord;  
Give them joys that never end. Amen.  
Alleluia.



Besides the desire for the Holy Spirit, we must also be practiced in receiving God's gifts. This is what it means to be a practicing Catholic. It means we are constantly putting ourselves into a position to receive His Love in the form of the Holy Spirit. The means of obtaining Grace that comes to us through the Holy Spirit is foremost found in the sacraments. Receiving the sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. Receiving the sacraments of healing frequently: confession and, when needed, the anointing of the sick. Receiving and living the sacraments of vocation, whether it be to marriage or holy orders.

Other means of receiving the gift of the spirit are: prayer – spending time with the Lord. You have to put yourself in his presence. You have to be intentional about it, not just passive. It means opening your heart, not just your lips. It means bending your will, not just your body.

Still other means are spending time in scripture – reading the Word with a desire to be filled with wisdom and knowledge and understanding; works of mercy and charity; making acts of forgiveness; making acts of surrender.

The reality is that we usually walk around in a state of habitual drought. Sometimes we don't even realize it. We are dehydrated, blind, deaf and without taste. This is even more so when we have been deprived of the sacraments or been estranged from the life of prayer for some time. We are seeing these effects most acutely in this past year when a global pandemic resulted in our churches being closed and the sacraments being limited. When we fall out of the practice of faith, we quickly become dehydrated, spiritually speaking. We have had to rely on our stores of water and grace, but they have often been depleted very quickly and we find ourselves running on empty. Thanks be to God that we are now at a time when restrictions and dispensations have been lifted so that we might once again receive the outflowing of Grace that comes from the sacraments.

But I will leave you with a last quote from St. Hilary: "This gift will remain with us until the end of the world, and will be our comfort in the time of waiting. By the favors it bestows, it is the pledge of our hope for the future, the light of our minds, and the splendor that irradiates our understanding."

Come, Holy Spirit!  
May Jesus Christ be Praised!