

PENTECOST SUNDAY

As the Church is re-opened again, everyone is rushing back to Church; & that reminds me of this cute story.

A little girl, dressed in her Sunday best, was running as fast as she could, trying not to be late for Sunday Service. As she ran, she prayed, "Dear Jesus, please don't let me be late! Dear Jesus, please don't let me be late!"

While she was running & praying, she tripped on a curb & fell, dirtying her dress & tearing her stockings. But she got right up, brushed herself off, & started running again. Then she began to pray, "Dear Jesus, please don't let me be late... but please don't shove me either!"

That might be the same experience some of us might have (running toward a Church Service/Mass) after 2 months & half being kept away from it. We rush toward Church, especially the Holy Eucharist, to reconnect ourselves with the Sacraments & their blessings. (For our RCIA/RCIC candidates, this church returning is a long-awaited experience. You've prepared & waited for the Easter Sacraments a bit longer this year.) I commend you all for your patient commitment to our Catholic faith & your presence here on this Pentecost Sunday to celebrate it again.

The Church was in the season of Lent when Church Services were shut down due to COVID-19. During that time, the Church celebrated the Holy Week (with Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil) & then Easter Sunday. Mary Magdalen & some apostles have claimed that they've met the risen Christ. Many still have not got the same experience & have tried to make sense out of Christ's death on the Cross & the empty tomb. After their Master's arrest & conviction to a humiliating death on the Cross, they were all fearful for their lives. They wondered who would be arrested next and condemned to death. So, they hid themselves in the Upper Room from the authority. Here's how today's Gospel shares that experience with us, "On the evening of that first day of the week, even though the disciples had locked the doors of the place where they were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came & stood in their midst. He said, 'Peace be with you.'"

Like the early disciples, we all have had to hunker down & hide ourselves behind locked doors. It's not because we fear the authority. Rather, it's because we fear COVID-19 & other things. Surely many of us are not over that fear yet. We're still worried about this contagious, deadly virus. In America alone, we're heading close to 100 thousand deaths & over 1.7 million infected people. That's why SMM Parish Staff & I have worked diligently to come up with a meticulous protocol to keep this worshipping space safe & clean for you. If we don't take this virus seriously & follow safety measure, we might regret later. My friends, in time of fear & anxiety like this, Jesus comes to us in the Holy Communion & says, "Peace be with you!" We really need the peace of the Risen Christ more now than ever to reassure us that everything will be alright. Our Lord will be with us to guide & help us through this difficult & uncertain time. Jesus will give us wisdom & courage to figure out how to witness His Good News to the world in the days ahead.

However, peace is not the only blessing the Risen Christ would give us. Today's Gospel shares with us one more blessing that He has left with his disciples, "... He breathed on them & said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit!'" Is it a big deal for us to be blessed with the Holy Spirit? You bet it is! In case we wonder what the Holy Spirit can bring us, today's First Reading & the Second Reading tell us more about those blessings. The First Reading lets us know how the Holy Spirit helped the early disciples pick up different language & communicate with devout Jews of every nation under Heaven & visitors from Rome & all over the world. But, language ability is not the only blessing the Holy Spirit would give to Christ's Church. Today's Second Reading reminds us about other blessings of the Holy Spirit, "... There are different gifts but the same spirit. There are different ministries but the same Lord. There are different works but the same God who accomplishes all of them in everyone." So, Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit will bring us all kinds of wonderful gifts & help us accomplish lots of great work. Each of us has been blessed with

different talents & skills. The Holy Spirit will help us realize those gifts over time. The Holy Spirit will also give us a hand to accomplish wonderful things for the Kingdom of God if we learn to collaborate with it. Of course, the sky is the limit on how many more things the Holy Spirit will bring us.

My dear brothers & sisters, it's so wonderful & exciting for us to get back to Church again even though it's only 25 of our Church's normal capacity. I'm sure there're still a lot of fear & anxiety during this tough & uncertain time. Like most of the early disciples, we want to keep ourselves behind locked doors for fear of COVID-19 & other daily challenges. On this feast of Pentecost, the Risen Christ wants to reassure us that He'll continue to guide & help us by blessing us with His peace & the Holy Spirit. So, be strong & faithful as He calls us to witness His Good News & His Resurrection to the whole world. May the peace of the Risen Christ be with you today & in the days ahead.