

## **Pentecost Sunday (5/27/07)**

Pentecost celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit to the world, or more specifically to the believers in Christ. Jesus and the Father send the Holy Spirit to empower believers to live in Christ and become His witnesses in the world. This is an important concept for us to understand; we are to be active witnesses to Christ by what we think, say and do. We will be distracted many times from this mission. Most distraction will come from Satan trying to subtly (without us being aware) lead us astray but some distraction comes from our lack of focus.

The Spirit distributes the various gifts as God sees fit, all for the unity and building up of the Body of Christ, the Church. We have no control over what gifts the Spirit might want to bestow on us; the Spirit bestows according to God's plan for the needs of the Body. What we do have control over is the willingness to accept the gifts of the Spirit. When we attune our lives to the purpose of the Spirit we remove our obstacles to the working of the Spirit; when we submit our lives to God, God increases His gifts for us to use as His witnesses in the world. The more we consciously dispose ourselves in the ordinary course of our daily lives to do God's will, we allow God's grace to flow through us to be His witnesses.

Pentecost is a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on how open we are to working with and for the Holy Spirit. May we renew our commitment to Christ and His Church on this feast of Pentecost, and rededicate our lives to the working of the Holy Spirit in the world. Doing this, we give honor and glory to God. Amen!!

## **The Ascension of the Lord (5/20/07)**

At the Last Supper Jesus comforts his disciples when He tells them that He will leave them soon, but that He will send the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen them to be His witnesses in the world. His leaving was first through His death, but His second leaving was the return to the Father in the Ascension. Jesus reminds us that His return to the Father is something good because then He can ask the Father and They will send the Holy Spirit to the disciples.

One of the main purposes of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to His disciples was to renew their faith which had been shaken by His crucifixion. Before He sends the Holy Spirit He wishes to personally reassure them, in His human form, though it is now a glorified humanity. Once they have regained their faith, He instructs them further in their future mission to the world. Jesus takes these ordinary, not-very-educated men and women and commissions them to be His witnesses to the whole world.

This same saving work of the Church continues today in our witness to the world. Jesus needs every one of us to witness to His truth and to proclaim repentance for our sins through Jesus. Jesus is the One and Only Savior of the world. "No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6). It is our vocation to live a life of faith in Jesus' redemptive work for us and to share that faith with our neighbors, many of whom have been deceived by Satan into believing that all faiths are equal and that there are many different paths to God. But we know for certain that only Jesus is "the way and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). Let us proclaim with our lives our total faith in Jesus Christ!

## **Sixth Sunday of Easter (5/13/07)**

Jesus tells his disciples at the Last Supper. "Whoever loves me will keep my word." Jesus' word is his faithfulness and obedience to his Father's will, that He offer himself for the salvation of the world. He asks his disciples also to be faithful to the Father's will, to all that he taught us, and to be willing to offer ourselves for our salvation and that of our neighbor. He asks us to be faithful to the deepest meaning of the commandments in all our actions and thoughts, which is a sacrificing love. Jesus knows that we will face many temptations (some we recognize, many we don't) to turn away from loving God and neighbor.

In the process of carrying the Word to the world, the early church faced many challenges. Probably the biggest was the encounter of Jewish Christianity with non-Jewish converts. The early church had to make wise decisions of what was important in order to go forward into the non-Jewish world. We too throughout our lives are asked to choose from what we have learned from our parents and families and church, and carry what is important into each new stage of our lives.

On Mother's Day we honor all that our mothers have taught us about God's love and what is important in life. We thank them and God for their selfless leadership and we continue our lives by passing on to each new generation what we have learned from those who have taught us well. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work reminding and teaching us what is necessary for our salvation and our service to the world through our witness to Christ. May we always be open to the Spirit which is always faithful to all that the Church has passed on to us. May we be faithful in our passing on to our children all that we have learned through our Spirit-led journey of life. Amen.