

Reflection for May 27, 2020
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Here we are on the sixth day of the Novena for Pentecost. How then shall we pray?

In these uncertain times, we are certainly calling out for the Spirit's gifts such as Wisdom, Understanding, and Fortitude. We desire that the *promise* of God's gracious *presence* will be made true among us. I believe we are sincere in our prayer, yet I have a couple of wonderings.

In reflecting on all the times I have read of God's promise and dealings with people, what has come through? Is it just history of the past? When the Spirit hovers over chaos to start things moving, do we think that was only then? When a young boy, David, acts with power; when a stuttering man is made to proclaim God's word; when a shy dresser of sycamore trees is made into a prophet; when a young girl asks "How can this be?" and the world is changed, how do we take it in?

Do I bow in awe before the *outpouring* of the Spirit that is going *on and on*? In other words, when I pray "Come Holy Spirit" seeking those gifts, what actually do I expect? Imagine if at a parish confirmation, one of the people broke out in tongues or prophecy. Oh my!

For years at Easter Vigils I hoped that it would happen. But even if someone was moved, they would be afraid to let it be seen or heard. Why? I suspect it's that they weren't prepared to *expect* it to happen or that others would understand.

Yet, at Jesus' baptism when the Spirit appeared and he heard the word, he went directly to the desert to prepare for his mission. In Acts 10, Peter summarizes: "God has anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all those who had fallen into the power of the devil." But Jesus knows he must pass his spirit on to those who will follow, to enable *them* for ministry.

In post resurrection appearances, "Jesus *breathed* on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit,'" and "...The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit will instruct you in everything and remind you of all I have told you. So Pentecost happened.

Then, we see the Spirit as the principle agent in the Acts of the Apostles. I am somehow delighted to see statements in the Acts such as: "The Holy Spirit *and we* agree..." Or, "The Spirit would not let us go to" one place ... but then a dream led them to the next place. Such an amazing trusting and *confident reliance* on the Spirit! Might I expect more of that kind of trust?

Yet in today's readings from Acts (20) and the Gospel (John 17), there is concern that false teachings and disunity might be spread in the community of believers when their leaders depart.

Jesus and Paul want their people to know the *power and authenticity* that comes from the “Spirit of truth.” Jesus prays, “Consecrate them in the truth.” Truth is something solid, something in which one can place confidence, since it neither fails nor defrauds. Truth is the authentic word of God, the *fidelity* of God that can overcome all obstacles, even our failings, to bring to fulfilment what was *promised*.

So, again: “How then shall we pray?”

First, we pray as Jesus prayed, “that they may be one just as we are one.” Unity is revealed in the multitude of gifts operating in *each* believer for the good of *all*. We ask to be humbly *aware* of the gifts we have to offer. We pray that the Spirit of Truth bring light, wisdom and perseverance to those who speak with *integrity* in every arena of private and public life. May untruth be banished from common discourse by this power. We pray to find ways within our *actual circumstances*, to do or support the actions that *heal* and uphold unity. Paul suggests humble service, generosity and assistance to the weak and needy. We desire as well, gracious speech, and abundant gratitude.

Finally we pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, come!

“You, of comforters the best; You, the soul’s most welcome guest”

prepare our hearts in *expectation*

for the awesome abundance of Pentecost blessings,

to be poured out here, and throughout the whole earth

for healing and for joy. Amen.