

NINTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

PENTECOST

- Sunday** **The Solemnity of Pentecost**
June 4 **Filled with the Spirit**
 A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant
- Mon** **Memorial of St. Boniface**
5 **Helping Each Other Keep Faith**
 A reflection based on a letter of St. Boniface to Pope achary
- Tues** **Tuesday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time**
6 **Assimilating the Spirit's Gifts**
 A reflection developed from a sermon by St. Augustine
- Wed** **Wednesday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time**
7 **The Gift that is Given Us**
 A reflection developed from a text by Fr. Karl Rahner
- Thurs** **Thursday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time**
8 **The Gift that is the Divine Office**
 A reflection developed from a text by J.D. Crichton
- Fri** **Friday of the Ninth Week in Ordinary Time**
9 **Participating in the Divine Kenosis**
 A reflection developed from a text by Serge Bulgakov
- Sat** **Memorial of Our Lady**
10 **The Dependence of the Holy Spirt**
 A reflection inspired by a text of Caryl Houselander
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FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

A reflection developed from a text by Sr. Dianne Bergant

We are easily distracted from what is essential. What is essential to the Spirit's Coming? It is not a matter of people of different language groups all understanding what is said in another language about God's wonderful deeds. It is not a matter of hearing the sound of powerful winds or seeing what looked like tongues of fire over their heads. We have been filled with the Holy Spirit and we are called to share some-thing of what that means.

Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthian church, says the Spirit's Coming is an experience of love for God and for Jesus and for all who have yet to receive the Spirit. It is a matter of wanting to share the good news that God offers all a new and never ending life, and one of service. We are all given abilities by God to help us serve and help others to a life like that of Jesus. The Spirit is Jesus' gift to us, as the Gospel today makes clear, and it enables us to forgive as God has forgiven us—without limit. It is a gift of mutual reconciliation.

One no longer seeks primarily the kinds of things people have to compete for but only God's love, which is offered freely to absolutely everyone. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with this love. So the Spirit's presence needn't call forth emotional enthusiasm or excitement or special feelings of exaltation. When St. Paul listed what he considered gifts of the Spirit he included things that we do feeling very ordinary, like teaching or administrating or caring for the sick. For the most part, we can know the Spirit is working within us simply by observing that we are more concerned with caring for people and the things that make people's lives better spiritually than with caring for ourselves or gaining praise. God is with us even when we are not excited or feeling special but even when we are down or depressed or feeling needy and unappreciated. It isn't our feelings which tell us of the Spirit's presence and working within us but our steady concern for the welfare, in every sense of the word, of others.

On Pentecost day the first disciples experienced something marvelous and extraordinary. But that only lasted for a few hours. Their lives of service, however, lasted many years, except for those who were martyred. Such lives involve many trials and sufferings. The Spirit's presence doesn't exclude bearing a cross but makes us see bearing one as an opportunity for love and service, to God and to one another.

HELPING EACH OTHER KEEP FAITH

A reflection developed from a Letter of St. Boniface to Pope Zachary

When Pope Gregory II, of revered memory, consecrated me bishop and sent me to preach the word of faith to the Germans he bound me by oath to support by word and deed all bishops and priests who were canonically elected and of blameless life. By divine grace I have tried to do this. However, false priests and hypocrites misleading people I was either to convert to the way of salvation or to reject and so refrain from associating with them. This I have in part accomplished. Yet in part I have not been able to avoid them. In spirit I have kept my oath because I have not agreed with them nor taken part in their counsels but, literally speaking, I couldn't avoid contact with them. When I went to the Frankish court on urgent church matters I found such persons there and I would rather not have met them but could do not otherwise if the business were to be taken care of.

Situated in the territories of the peoples to whom I have preached I have found a wooded place, in the midst of a wilderness, where I have gathered a community of monks living under the rule of St. Benedict and had a monastery built. These monks live an ascetic life, abstain from meat, from wine and spirits, keep no servants but are content with the work of their own hands. Among such a community it is easy to keep my oath. The Spirit dwells among such people.

I acquired this place through the help of pious and God-fearing people, especially Carloman formerly King of the Franks. I have dedicated it to our Holy Savior. With your permission I will retire there to rest my worn and ancient body for a little while, and be buried there when I have died. As long as I live I will serve, with your support, the poor people who dwell in that region and to whom, as all know, I have preached the Word of God. I ask that you sustain me by your prayers and help me to continue my close relationship with you and remain in your service among the German people to whom I was sent.

I seek to live by the Scripture which reads, "Hear the judgment of your father, O my children, and so act that you may be saved. He that gives glory to a father shall have length of days. In deed and word, honor your father that a blessing may come to you, for the blessings of fathers establish the houses of their children". God is our father and Christ is our brother and the Spirit they send us keeps us faithful. May it always be so among those who have received God's Word.

ASSIMILATING THE SPIRIT'S GIFTS

A reflection taken from a sermon by St. Augustine of Hippo

The Coming of the Holy Spirit inaugurated a time of growth and transformation. It is a time of faith in which we learn more and more deeply what it means to be Church, the Body of Christ. We have all heard Jesus' promise, "*If anyone is thirsty, let that person come to me and drink! Whoever believes in me experiences rivers of living water flowing from the heart.*" The Gospel goes on to explain that this is possible only because Jesus has been glorified through his death and passion and resurrection. But what are these "living waters"?

The mighty wind that was heard on Pentecost cleansed the disciples' hearts of all merely earthly thoughts like so much chaff. The fire that hovered over their heads burned away all untransformed desires as if they were straw. The fact that each of those who heard them speak of the deeds of God understood these words in their native language foreshadowed the fact that the Gospel would be heard and believed by people from all nations. This reminds us of the story of the Tower of Babel, and teaches us that mutual misunderstanding and conflict come from efforts to control our own lives in the way we want, and without consideration of what God has taught us. We can't through art or technology gain a heavenly life.

What the Spirit would teach us is how to cooperate and support one another in the path God has pointed out to each of us, and exemplifies in Jesus. We are to seek to help each other become, as it were, members of a single body. The now separated members of our race can become one by being joined to Christ. All have to be fixed permanently in unity by the power, the fire, of love. That is what the Spirit brings. To cut oneself off from the one body is to cut oneself off from the gift of the Spirit. All who labor for unity and harmony according to the gift of God are by that fact joined to one another.

You are my fellow members of Christ's body. Our unity is the fruit of the Spirit. Its gift is peace and harmony. When we celebrate the gift of the Spirit we celebrate that within us which makes us one, makes us Church, makes us members of the One Christ—and in deed and not in word alone. In us the Spirit creates the Church and all that it symbolizes and is meant to be. When we speak the language of love we speak to all peoples in the Spirit. If you have that Spirit in you nothing can separate you from Christ or from all who are one with Christ. The language of love is that of every nation. Let it be your native language.

THE GIFT THAT IS GIVEN US

A reflection developed from a text by Fr. Karl Rahner

The center of all reality is the love of the all-holy God and it has been given to us as our center and heart! A new day has dawned but we can't seem to grasp its meaning. God is ours! God hasn't merely given us a gift, something created and finite, but has given us the entirety of Divine Reality, and without reserve. We have received the clarity of God's knowledge, the freedom of God's love, and the bliss of Trinitarian life. God gives us God. The name of this gift is "Holy Spirit".

That is the Good News of Pentecost. It is a radiant message that brings us tidings of strength, light and victory. It is the message that God loves us and has blessed us with the gift that is the Holy Spirit. Is this message, and gift, really in us—in our blood and in our genes, so to speak? Is it for me just words and rhetoric to pump up a feast day that makes no real difference? Do you and I need to cry out, *"Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief!"*

The Spirit of God goes where it will and roams the world as a kind of loving presence touching people wherever they are. God's grace is omnipotent! God says to each of us, "You are mine!" God stamps us with an indestructible seal upon our hearts. It is God's strength and life and we have not been touched by ideas or pious feelings but by the personal and incarnate action of God!

But we can quench the Spirit and hinder it from bringing us the fruit that is eternal life. What we must do is open ourselves again every day, turn to the Spirit of the Lord constantly so that we are converted and transformed. And the essential is prayer. The Church was in prayer when the Spirit came upon it on Pentecost day. Remember that this is a Spirit that we can't merit or draw down from heaven by some holy deed. We can't compel the Spirit even by our cries of despair and distress. The Spirit is always and at each moment a free gift from above. But we can cry out: "Come, secret joy, into our hearts and into the tears of our broken world! We have nothing but we trust in your love!" That is why we are confident beyond describing. Come, Holy Spirit! That prayer is enough.

THE GIFT THAT IS THE DIVINE OFFICE

A reflection taken from a text by J.D. Crichton

The Church has given us a gift of prayer developed around the prayers we have been given in Scripture by God's People, Israel. It is called "the Divine Office". Literally translated, this means "the Divine Duty". When we pray it, we have been taught, we are in the midst of a special time, what our first Christian ancestors called a *kairos*, for the reception of the Holy Spirit.

St. Benedict, who in the sixth century of our era provided an "office" for all the monastic families of the West, was perfectly aware of this. Prayer, he says, should be pure and brief—"unless, by chance, it be prolonged by the impulse and inspiration of divine grace". He is speaking of the Holy Spirit. He thought of this praying as a calm and orderly celebration of prayer that quiets the mind and the senses so that the monk can hear the voice of God in the psalms and readings. In this way the Holy Spirit can make its presence known.

Disposing people to experience this has been the goal of every revision of the Divine Office which has taken place over the centuries, including that sponsored by the Second Vatican Council for our time. Note especially the emphasis on moments of silence—after the readings, for instance. And, if a community so desires, this may be prolonged. There is an opportunity for unstructured and very personal prayer, just as we experience when we have the intercessions at the Eucharist after the day's readings.

This supposes that a community, or even an individual, has prayed the psalms "in the Spirit" and has listened to such readings as are given in the same way. The Holy Spirit communicates with us through psalms and readings and we have the opportunity to respond then "in the Spirit". In the words of St. Paul, we can pray "not only with our spirit and our mind" but in the Holy Spirit. Paul considered both essential. The final result will be that two forms of prayer—the liturgical and the charismatic and individual—will be combined. From this springs the contemplation through which the Spirit can guide us to ever new riches of understanding and love and service. These are inseparable from that prayer which is genuinely "in the Spirit". It can accompany us in all our daily tasks and make them indeed works of holy love. From such love springs joy!

PARTICIPATING IN DIVINE KENOSIS

A reflection developed from a text by Serge Bulgakov

The revelation of the Father is not directly to the world but to the Son and through the Spirit. The Father and the Son empty themselves into the world to manifest the one will of God and do this through the Spirit. The entire Trinity stands in a kenotic relation with the world. “Kenosis” means “emptying” and this is the characteristic way in which God gives by giving self. Each of the Three Divine Person is such a giving.

The *kenosis* of the Father is the creation of the world out of nothing. The act of creation isn’t just a manifestation of divine power but a voluntary self-diminishment, as we may put it, whereby the divine Absolute brings about the existence of beings outside of itself. The *kenosis* of the Son consists in taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness (Phil. 2:7). The *kenosis* of the Spirit consists in being the servant of the Son.

Each of the Divine Persons, so to speak, conceals its own identity or ‘Face’ behind that of one of the others, and this until the end of the age. But the difference in modes shouldn’t be taken as implying that the kenosis of any one of the Persons takes place in isolation from the others. The Trinity, on the contrary, is the quintessential image of communion. None of the Three acts in isolation from the others.

We too are called to a *kenosis*. The Spirit enables us to respond to this call. It doesn’t force our human freedom but persuades it, winning us over with patience and humility, as it were, in an “ongoing Pentecost”. This *kenosis* will also not be complete until the end of the age when God is all in all, as the New Testament tells us.

We know and believe that the Spirit isn’t seen just as the Church-giver and Church-creator of the day of Pentecost. It is the life-giver of the first day and every day of creation. It is the enlivener and beautifier of creation every day. Seen from this perspective, the gift of Pentecost is best described as a renewal or making new of life. Relative to what preceded this day there is no discontinuity. The Holy Spirit is the life-giver for both Church and world and these realities aren’t separable but linked. That is why our *kenosis* is a caring for the world and all those who inhabit it—as we are reminded in Genesis. Every day the Spirit leads us to pour ourselves out in the service of newness of life, for others even more than for ourselves. If you are exhausted by the labors of the day then you have begun to experience the reality of the *kenosis* by which you are re-created and redeemed and made instruments of renewal and new life in the Spirit.

THE DEPENDENCE OF THE SPIRIT

A reflection inspired by Caryll Houselander

When a woman is carrying a child she develops a certain instinct of self-defense. It is not selfishness; it is not egoism. It is an absorption into the life within—a kind of folding of self like a little tent around the child's frailty, a God-given instinct to cherish and bring forth new life. It is like the closing of flower petals upon a drop of dew at its heart. In Mary's case this drop came from the Holy Spirit and was a divine life incarnate in the frailty to a human being. This is the way it is for every Christian who has received Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

By God's own will God-made-human in Jesus Christ through the over-shadowing of the Holy Spirit was wholly dependent on Mary while he grew to perfect manhood. He was absolutely helpless; he could go nowhere but where she chose to take him; he could not speak; her breathing was his breath; his heart beat in the beating of her heart. That is how Christ depends on us when the Spirit had planted divine life within us.

This dependence of Christ, this emptying of God the Son in becoming a human being, lays a great trust upon us. During the time we carry divine life within us and seek to support its growth with all we are and do we must let Christ tell us where he would have us take him and tells us what he would have us say about him. There are many places he wants to go, and there are many to which he can't go unless we take him there. Unless we accept the breathing of the Spirit he cannot enter into our hearts and minds and the divine life cannot take root and grow in us. As it grows we become the instruments by which many other hearts and lives can be opened, and opened more and more fully, to Divine Love. Even today that is what God would have us do and what the Spirit is leading us to do with all we are. Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and mind and strength! That is today's task.