

6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER, CYCLE A
Acts 8: 5-8, 14-17 + 1 Peter 3: 15-18 + John 14: 15-21
Holy Spirit Catholic Church: May 17, 2020

Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary and son of God, no longer walks the earth. Next Sunday we will celebrate the glorious truth that He has ascended into heaven, returning home to reign forever at the Father's right hand, to intercede for us always. He is gone, yet he remains here on the earth he loves, just in a different way, in different form of Presence.

The Risen Lord, conqueror of sin and death, remains with humanity, by the gift of the Spirit of Truth which he shares with His Father.

The Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, the life-giving flow of love between Father and Son, remains with us always.

The Holy Spirit draws us deeper into life in and with the Risen Lord Jesus, and with the Risen Lord, we abide forever in the Father.

The Church invites us during these 50 days of the Easter Season to plunge deeper into the life of the Spirit.

To be attentive, more aware of this divine flow of life within us and among us, which is deeper than the disruptions of the world.

To pay more attention to this subterranean stream of divine love carrying us deeper into the life of the Trinity, and flowing through us into the world.

Jesus ascends while the Spirit descends,

to live within his followers as his continuing presence with them always.

The Spirit comes as "another Advocate" to defend us from the attacks of the enemy and to reveal the truth of God's eternal love for humanity.

The word for "Advocate" in Greek is "Paraklitos," which literally means "defense attorney."

This is important description for the Spirit of Truth,

because the Evil One is described in Scripture as the "accuser".

When we are being "accused" and attacked by the Father of Lies, it is good to remember we are not alone, but that the Spirit of Truth is with us, defending us.

The Spirit of Truth, shining with the bright light of divine love,
reveals the accusations of the devil for what they are---lies.

There are many lies that we are tempted to believe, and one of the deadly lies
during this COVID-19 time is that God has abandoned us.

As we face great suffering and incredibly uncertainty, the accuser whispers,
“You are alone. God has abandoned you.”

But when we call upon the Advocate, the Paraklitos, to defend us,
the Spirit of Truth protects us from this devastating lie.

For we are never alone, because by our baptism, the Spirit remains with us always.
For we are never alone, for the Spirit connects us to the Son and the Father—
we live out of the life and love of the Trinity.

We are never alone, for the Spirit of unity connects us
to our brothers and sisters in Christ, even when we are not physically in their presence.

We are never alone, for the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead connects us
to all the faithful departed who have gone before us.

By the power of the Spirit, they are still present to us and surround us with their love,
encouraging us to finish the race of faith.

The Spirit of Truth constantly reminds us of what the Son has revealed to us
about who God is and how God acts.

In the life and teaching of Jesus, we see that God is always faithful, ever kind,
and patient with our erring ways.

The Spirit reminds us of the generosity of God revealed by Jesus giving his life
fully for us and to us, of the gentleness of God in the Son
who would not break a bruised reed of a person.

The Spirit of Truth IS the gift of peace from the Risen Lord, the gift of a joy
that is deeper than the passing sorrows of this world, the gift of Love,
the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father poured into our hearts.

The Holy Spirit, being “spirit”, cannot be captured and bottled in order to be seen.
We “see” the Spirit active in our world by the fruits produced by the Spirit
in people’s lives.

We cannot see all the life surging from the roots of a fruit tree, through its trunk,
and coursing through its branches, but we can see the fruit.

So it is with the Spirit and the fruits the Spirit produces.

When we see someone respond to cruelty with kindness, the Spirit is there.

When we witness the patience of someone who endures suffering with hope,
who is not consumed by wanting everything resolved and fixed right now,
the Spirit is there.

When we notice faithfulness in all its mundane yet glorious forms—
a couple happily married for many years together,
the daily prayers and sacrifices by a parent for a wayward child,
the fidelity of friends through thick and thin, Spirit is there.

When we see generosity in a greedy world, when we notice gentleness
in a culture which prizes brute strength, and when we witness self-control
in a society that preaches “do whatever feels good,” the Spirit is there.

When joy flows into the world from those who have so little, when peace is practiced
in response to violence, when love flames forth in the face of hatred, the Spirit is there.

The 9 fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) give visible evidence to this underground
stream of divine life flowing through the lives of believers into a thirsty world.
Kindness, patience, and faithfulness; generosity, gentleness, and self-control;
love and joy and peace, are all powerful signs that the Spirit of Truth remains with us.

This Thursday the Church begins its annual “Novena to the Holy Spirit”
in preparation for the great solemnity of Pentecost.

This Novena, nine days of prayerful preparation, is especially important for our parish
as we prepare to celebrate our first Masses in our new church building on Pentecost.
Also, during these nine days of prayer we cry out for a fresh outpouring
of the Spirit of Truth on our world, for the life-giving Spirit to strengthen those suffering
from the impact of the coronavirus.

I invite you to pray a very specific Novena this year,
for a greater flowering of the fruits of the Spirit in our lives, in our parish, & in the world.
There are 9 fruits of the Spirit, so each of the 9 days of the Novena
focus on a different fruit.

As we prayerfully reflect together on how the fruits of the Spirit are ripening in our life,
we pray: “Come Holy Spirit, enkindle in us the fire of divine love,
and you shall renew the face of the earth.”

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi