

## **ASCENSION of the Lord, CYCLE A**

*Acts 1: 1-11 + Psalm 47 + Ephesians 1: 17-23 + Matthew 28: 16-20*

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: May 24, 2020

We human beings do not like change.

In fact, the older we become, the more we dislike change,  
for we are creatures of habit.

Then a pandemic comes along and changes everything, even the way we worship.

So, we feel uncomfortable wearing a mask to Mass.

We are not able to sit in our regular pew but are ushered into the building  
and basically told, "*You will sit here.*"

Then there's the awkwardness of receiving Communion with a mask.

I do not like the changes, either.

I do not like wearing a mask giving out Communion  
nor while conversing with you before or after Mass.

A mask hides my smiling face from you as I greet you,  
one of the best ways I can say without words, "*I am glad you are here.*"

I do not like shortening the Mass nor shortening my homily,  
though some of you may like both these changes.

I do not like that we are not singing, especially as we prepare to move into a new building  
that was built for singing.

I do not like giving out Holy Communion at the end of Mass,  
as if this were a drive thru where you picked up Jesus and left as quickly as possible.

But when it comes to the common good, it really does not matter what you or I like.

All these changes which cause some discomfort are about something bigger  
than our small, selfish desires.

They are being made at this time for the Common Good,  
for something bigger than "me"—for a collective "we"—and to receive the Eucharist.

We are in this together, and we are called to look out for and care for and protect others.

So, unless you are wearing one of those special N95 masks,  
the face covering you are using is not so much for your protection  
as it is for others around you in case you have to cough or sneeze.

Physical distancing, not singing, shortening the Mass are all about provide a safer  
environment for everyone.

Besides, the sacrifices we are being called to make for worship pale in comparison to those in the medical field on the front-line and other essential workers, as well as the ultimate sacrifice made by those we remember tomorrow on Memorial Day.

The challenge we constantly face is we live in a culture of hyper-individualism. So, moving from the cultural virus of hyper-individualism to living lives of sacrificial love can be difficult. We can only do so by the power of the Spirit of Love, by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Every day we breathe in the cultural air of hyper-individualism, which is a breath of stale, polluted air compared to the life-giving breath of the Spirit. Our culture tells us in a million different ways: Do what makes YOU feel good. Do what YOU want. No need to worry about others, because it is your life to live as you want to live it.

But when we breathe in the fresh air of the Holy Spirit, our eyes are opened to see a different reality. We see the truth that we are all interconnected. We are one human family, not a bunch of countries or tribes or factions. By the light of the Holy Spirit we recognize that what each of us says or does impacts others for good or ill.

It is challenging to live a life different from what our culture teaches us, because the virus of hyper-individualism is invisible, it's in the very air we breathe. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit can we move into a different way of living, and be protected from the death of navel gazing and narcissism.

To move beyond me to a collective we, to move beyond selfish desires and actions to living for the Common Good, we need a powerful antidote, the antidote of the Spirit. In order to re-pattern our lives on the Lord Jesus, in order to conform our lives to His and truly be Christian, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. To be patient with others and ourselves during these trying times, we need the Holy Spirit to produce this fruit in our lives. To be loving and kind, we need the Holy Spirit to produce these fruits in our lives.

So, we pray, "*Come, Holy Spirit.*" Transform this bread which will be placed upon this altar into the Real Presence of the Risen Lord, so that as we receive the Body of Christ, we will know He remains with us always.

So, we pray, *“Come, Holy Spirit.”*

Change us from separate individuals into One Body, with Christ as our Head.

Then we know the truth of His promise, that He remains with us always in His Church.

So, we pray, *“Come, Holy Spirit.”*

Transform each one of us into something more, into a living temple  
of God’s presence in the world.

Flow through each of us as a river of life-giving mercy into the world.

Then the Lord Jesus who remains with us always can come through us to others.

So, we pray, *“Come, Holy Spirit, kindle in us the fire of your love,  
and you shall renew the face of the earth.”*

*Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi*