

Sixth Sunday of Easter Cycle A

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17 * Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20 * 1 Peter 3:15-18 * John 14:15-21

In the first reading today, Philip is on fire with the Holy Spirit as he is out, performing miracles in Samaria. And then Peter and John are sent out from Jerusalem to lay hands on them so they can receive the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel reading today, Jesus ask us to keep His commandments if we love Him and that He will send the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, to be with us always.

Simply put, the Holy Spirit is the love of God poured out into our hearts. And the Spirit comes to us in different ways. Sometimes like a breath and other times like a raging river that just pours over us. We can often miss the subtlety of the Spirit in our lives or discount the powerful movement of the Spirit as just being emotional.

Being attentive to the movement of the Spirit in our lives can help us to draw closer to God and we can also be a source of drawing others closer to God. We are not just temples of the Holy Spirit – we are vessels of the Holy Spirit. Each of us become a source by which God pours His love out onto the world. The more in touch we are with the Spirit in our lives, the more our temple become a vessel which overflows.

I want to share some practical examples of the Holy Spirit working in my life. I have been doing this bible study two days each week online and the discussions have been great. I never cease to be amazed at how the Spirit works through the collective group. I was really struck by the subtlety of the Spirit when one person said – we often think about holding on to Jesus in times of struggle or difficulty, but the reality of it is that Jesus is holding on to us. Stopped me in my tracks to think about it in this way. But isn't that the case, that by the power of the Holy Spirit, God is not only with us, but He is holding on to us. Imagine going through your day being constantly aware that in every moment and every situation, God is holding on to you. This might give us a different perspective on how we live out our lives not in the world but in the Spirit.

Here is another example of how the Spirit works. One of my biggest struggles in living out the Christian life is at work because somedays Satan seems to be coming at me from all directions. And this surging of angst and frustration I experience manifests itself in how I deal with people. There are times when I have not been the best version of myself that I am convicted by the Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, and once again it stops me in my tracks. I immediately feel remorse and recognize I need to do better. You see, I forgot that God was already holding me, and the raging river of His Holy Spirit can overpower any thing Satan wants to throw at me.

One last example of how the Spirit works – a 2x4! Yes, sometimes God can be obvious when He wants to tell you something or realizes you are not going to figure it out without some clearer direction! And I have numerous experiences of this in my life, but I will share only one with you. It was meeting my wife. I was not living a good life when I meet Debbie, but God used her as a 2x4 (and still does sometimes!) to stop me in my tracks and re-direct me. It was not long after we met that I knew she was who I wanted to marry (2nd date) and she in a very special way is one of the ways that God holds on to me, convicts, and gets my attention. This is the beauty of the Sacrament of Marriage where the love of God has been poured onto me through her for the past 32 years. She is having surgery this Monday on her cervical spine so I ask for your prayers for her.

I have given you all these example of the Spirit working in my life in hopes that when you look at your own life you will see the many ways God has been holding on to you. We can be more in touch with the loving embrace of God, with His Holy Spirit by more frequent participation in the Sacraments. Take the time to go to confession at least once per month because it does make a difference. This is the love of God's mercy poured out on us. And I hope that soon we will be able to all receive the Eucharist which is the love of God's Body and Blood poured out for us.

There is a song called the Deer's Cry which is based on the prayer of Saint Patrick that describes the Spirit of Christ in each of our lives:

I arise today - Through the strength of Heaven - Light of sun - Radiance of moon - Splendor of fire -Speed of lightning -
Swiftness of wind - Depth of the sea - Stability of earth - Firmness of rock - I arise today - Through Gods strength to pilot
me - Gods eye to look before me - Gods wisdom to guide me - Gods way to lie before me - Gods shield to protect me -
From all who shall wish me ill - Afar and anear - Alone and in a multitude - Against every cruel - Merciless power- That

may oppose my body and soul - Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ to shield me, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me - I arise today. As we arise each day, let us remember that God is holding on to us.