

I. “... I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, ...”

A. The scene of the Last Supper

1. An air of finality, separation, farewell
2. An air of apprehension, fear sadness
3. Jesus seeks to reassure his followers
4. That he would send the Advocate, the Spirit, to be with them – whatever that meant

B. We have been reading from the Acts of the Apostles how the Apostles and early followers of Jesus came to understand and experience the presence of that Spirit in their lives and experience and in what eventually became their ministry

1. Early Christians experienced Jesus as one who came from God, spoke God’s word, and made God’s presence among them real, nourishing, and enlivening --their continuing experience of Jesus’ presence among them is his Spirit
2. The Spirit is the source of vitality for the believing Church after the resurrection of Jesus
3. The function of the Spirit is to continue the mission of Jesus
4. The Spirit is God’s love, Jesus’ love, our love
 - a) *For each other and for the whole world*
 - b) *The Spirit is poured out and visible in the love disciples show to one another, to community members, to neighbors, and to strangers who seek to join them*

C. We are challenged by the First Letter of Peter to seek out and use the grace of the Holy Spirit when we are exhorted:

1. “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame.”
2. Rejection and even persecution are always possible

3. Peter urges us to be prepared for such difficulties and to live in a way that puts any detractors to shame
4. It is in the power of the Holy Spirit that we can respond to his exhortation

II. SO, AT THE END OF APRIL IN THE YEAR 2008 WE FIND OURSELVES WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON OUR NEED FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT IN LIVING OUR LIFE AS CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS AND TO PRAY THAT THE SPIRIT CONTINUE TO BE Poured FORTH UPON US IN ABUNDANCE

A. On Friday of this week more than 150 youth of our parish will celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation, the special Sacrament of the Holy Spirit which our Whole Community Catechesis session this afternoon will focus on

1. I would challenge any of us adults to walk in the shoes of those young people trying to live their lives as committed Christians today
2. The lure of so many things is bombarding them constantly – peer pressure, consumerism (e.g. designer clothes), seeking immediate gratification through chemicals or inappropriate sexual behavior
3. I was privileged to spend most of the day with them on Saturday April 12 at their retreat, and we have reason to be so proud of our youth – but they need to the strength of the Holy Spirit to remain committed to their faith, to remain attached to us

B. Our parish community needs a superabundant outpouring of the Spirit right now

1. We are facing a critical point with our facility stretched just about beyond our capacity
 - a) *How can we expand?*
 - b) *How can we better get to and from our facility?*
 - c) *What should be our next step or move?*
2. We are facing an income crunch in the near future
 - a) *To meet our growing needs we have growing expenses, as I know all of you have in your homes as well (e.g. gas prices)*
 - b) *But our income is actually declining*

c) Even to the point where I find myself questioning my pastoral leadership of the parish

3. There is a critical need for all of us to continue to be formed in our faith, especially we adults

a) To help with that we have embarked upon an approach to forming all of us regardless of our age through Whole Community Catechesis

b) And I think it's bearing good fruit

c) We will do even more of that in the next academic and fiscal year

d) But hearts must be changed by the Spirit to appreciate the importance of all of us continuing to be formed in faith

4. We need the Spirit's guidance to help us all understand better what it means to be disciples of the Lord Jesus, to be stewards of all that he has given us

a) I have formed a Stewardship Committee in the parish

b) For almost a year now we have been studying what it means to be disciples, to be stewards

c) It is about time to get that message out to the parish as a whole

d) Thus in the coming months you will begin to hear about Discipleship/Stewardship retreats, a parish newsletter, a parish survey, a parish census and a new parish pictorial directory

e) The Holy Spirit is the only way we can successfully accomplish all of that

C. As citizens and residents of the United States of America we need to pray that the Holy Spirit enlighten us and our leaders

1. Our country is terribly polarized, and that goes all the way up to the halls of Congress and the Supreme Court

a) A country divided is in serious danger of collapsing

b) We need the spirit to guide us back to unity

2. We are in election season

a) We must look beyond personal biases and prejudices (liberal, conservative, gender, race) and truly discern who our future leaders need to be

b) With the help of the Holy Spirit

3. Crime and violence are a tremendous plague upon our society

a) Our own people and parish property are not immune to these

- b) Substance abuse has become a national pastime and fuels the wave of crime and violence*
- c) We need the Spirit's guidance to bring an end to the out of control spiral we find ourselves and our country in*
- 4. Our economy seems to be in serious trouble
 - a) We need to examine our own spending*
 - b) We need to be more responsible with our wealth as a nation*
 - c) We have an obligation to help those less fortunate than ourselves*
 - d) Holy Spirit stir our hearts*

D. Our world community today also needs the power of the Spirit to be made known

1. To help us cherish every human life as precious and of value, from conception to natural death
2. To appreciate and understand God's plan for marriage and the commitment and legitimate expression of that commitment
3. To empower us to be good stewards of the earth and its resources
4. To instill in people of all backgrounds and religious beliefs a sense of mutual respect and toleration
5. To bring about peace where there is war and threat of war and to bring an end to terrorism and the insanity which it breeds

**III. YES, BETWEEN NOW AND PENTECOST SUNDAY WHEN WE WILL
CELBRATE THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE**

- A. Let us appreciate our need for the Spirit and its gifts in our lives**
- B. And pray for an outpouring of that Spirit upon us, upon our parish, upon our country, and upon our world**
- C. Come, Holy Spirit, come!**