

Sixth Sunday of Easter – 2017 A

Last Wednesday, the Holy Spirit came. More specifically, the Spirit came to some 30 young people from our ACC and breathed into them a new share in divine life. What do you remember about your own Confirmation? For many of us, I suspect it is a rather vague event out of the distant past. I was confirmed by Bishop Speltz over at St. Peter's in the Bicentennial Year of 1976. I don't recall much about that. But I do remember that I felt no different the day after than I had before. No mighty wind, no tongues of flame, no new language skills. Nothing remarkable seemed to happen. I have no doubt at all that the Holy Spirit came, but He certainly seemed quiet and maybe a little shy to show Himself.

The reading from Acts today speaks of one of the earliest Confirmation ceremonies, as the Apostles travel to Samaria – once considered outsiders in Jesus' time – to confer the Spirit. Over the years of ministry, I have been at dozens of Confirmations. I have never seen anything remarkable happen at those ceremonies ... *other than getting dozens of 10th and 11th graders dressed up and in church at the same time, perhaps. Maybe they too often feel a bit like outsiders in the Church.* But truly, something remarkable DOES happen when the Spirit comes, bearing fruit only with time, patience, and gradually learning to live life according to the Spirit of God. *The patient and enduring love of mothers that we honor today can help us understand the kind of life and love God bestows in the Spirit.*

If you have been confirmed, last week or in the last millennium like me, the Spirit has never left you or been dormant in you. We are only confirmed once because the Spirit, the Promise of Jesus, the Advocate and Counselor, comes, *and comes to stay.* At every Mass you have been to, the Spirit has come upon bread and wine to change them into the Body and Blood of Jesus. The Spirit has encouraged and supported every deed of kindness, every act of service, every sacrifice of love you have made. The Spirit has helped you every time you prayed, and forgiven your sins in every confession. The Spirit teaches you to recognize Truth, reminding you of all Jesus has said and helping you to hear the Voice of Christ among

all the voices that constantly clamor for our attention. The Spirit is the last of the Persons of the Trinity to be revealed, and most often works in quiet, hidden, subtle ways ... not that the Spirit is shy or distant, but because the Spirit is Love; and as mothers show us daily, love always focuses on the Other, not the Self.

The Spirit brings order out of chaos, as at the Creation of all things – in times of chaos, pray for that gift of Order. The Spirit overshadowed Mary to make that Word flesh in her womb, receiving the gift of life like every mother; when God asks something difficult or uncertain, ask the Spirit to help you say with Mary, “Let it be done as God says.” The Spirit was breathed forth by Jesus at His death, returned in love to the Father from the Cross; and the Spirit returns to that Body to raise Jesus to new life. In times of change, ask the Spirit to make all things new. The Spirit was breathed on the Eleven in the Upper Room by Jesus, and the Spirit gave birth to the Church at Pentecost. When your own spirit is dull, or tempted, or assailed by apathy and doubt, ask the Spirit to stir you into flame and bring joy and hope. The Spirit remains at work – subtly, hidden, quietly – but always causing great things within the Body of Christ.

Today, perhaps you can dig out photos of your Confirmation if you have them; or at least say a prayer of thanksgiving to those who shared their faith and love of God to prepare you for that sacrament. Each year, all over the Church, generous men and women do the same. Like the Spirit, they often share their gifts in ways that are quiet and unseen by most. But they are co-workers with the Holy Spirit, Who comes to renew the face of the earth, to bring order out of chaos, to be God’s Peace in our midst. Come, Holy Spirit, be our Helper and Guide, and again do great things in the Body of Christ.