

Homily at St. Walburge's – Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension

28 May 2017

(1Pet. 4:7-11; John 15:26-27; 16:1-4)

Homily



At this time, following the Solemnity of the Ascension, the Church awaits in prayer and in faith the coming of the Holy Spirit, promised by the Lord Jesus in today's gospel. It is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, who continues to guide and direct the Church on her way through history. In the time of the Apostles and the foundation of the Church we read that the Holy Spirit was particularly active, inspiring and strengthening the disciples particularly when they met suffering and persecution. Stephen, the first martyr, we are told in the Acts of the Apostles was full of the Holy Spirit, as was Barnabas, the travelling companion of St. Paul.

Dear brothers and sisters, we too are called to be 'full of the Holy Spirit', and as we await the feast of Pentecost, let us pray for an open heart so that the Spirit can lead us ever more deeply into the truth about Jesus as the Son of the Father, our Lord and our Saviour. We can only love what we know, and the aim of the Christian life is to grow in the knowledge of Jesus, so as in the words of Paul 'to put on the mind of Christ.' Let us recite each day as we await Pentecost the well-known invocation, "Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love."

St. Peter urges us in our first reading to be faithful to the demands of the Christian way of life, by showing love and offering hospitality to one another. In truth, it is by practising the apparently simple virtues each day that we give proof of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit at work among us. It is the teaching of the Church and explicitly of the Second Vatican Council that each baptised Christian possesses his or her own gift of grace from the Holy Spirit, however small or ordinary that gift may seem. We have all been baptised in Christ; we have put on Christ, and so share each in our own way in his gift of the Holy Spirit, of which St. John tells us the Lord Jesus had the fullness.

I urge you to pray for the Church as we look forward to Pentecost that God's Holy Spirit of love and unity may keep us all united in the truth of Christ, and be one body and one spirit. Pray also for the peace of the world, for an end to violence and destruction and that men and women everywhere may learn to live together in harmony as sons and daughters of the one heavenly Father. We pray today that the Lord will not leave us like orphans, but will send the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth. Amen.

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