



PENTECOST PASTORAL NOTE

TRUTH & UNITY

THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we approach the great feast of Pentecost, I feel called in my prayer to write to you about the Holy Spirit. I have preached in the past about the importance of a personal relationship with each person of the Trinity. Yet a relationship with the Holy Spirit can seem difficult because, unlike the Father or the Son, we do not often see images of the Holy Spirit depicted as a person. A relationship with the Spirit, though, is essential to our lives as disciples. In fact, one of the themes that emerged during our recent archdiocesan discernment process was a clear desire from people to have a greater relationship with the Holy Spirit, to know the gifts and charisms that he gives, and how to use them to advance God's kingdom on Earth.

As we move as an archdiocese towards a missionary mode of life, it is important to remember that Christ did not send out his apostles immediately after his Ascension. Instead, "he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). The apostles gathered around Mary in prayer to wait for the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus told his disciples to wait and pray because reclaiming the world from the power of the evil one is beyond our human abilities. Only the grace of God prepares people's hearts to receive the power of the Gospel. The inspiration of the Holy Spirit gives us the words to speak and ensures that all our efforts will bear fruit that will last.

We have all received the Holy Spirit in our baptisms and an outpouring of his gifts in our confirmations. We must choose, however, whether we ignore this gift of divine life or whether we choose to grow in intimacy with the third Person of the Trinity.

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WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit is the love of the Father and Son, the love that is the unity of the Father and the Son. St. John tells us that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:16), but the Holy Spirit is love in a unique way as the third Person of the Trinity. When we love, the image of our beloved is imprinted on our hearts. We always carry this image with us, and it moves our will to love the other. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit is this imprint of love of the Father and the Son. When the Holy Spirit dwells within us, he imprints God on our hearts as our beloved, drawing us to love God with God’s own love—charity.

When we ask, “why did Jesus come?” or “why did the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit?” we can come up with many answers. During Advent, we heard that Christ came to rescue us from the power of sin, death, and the evil one and to restore us to life. We can say that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Life, is sent to continue this mission. But God does not want to simply rescue us; he desires more for us. Together, the missions of the Son and the Spirit can be summed up as: they came so that we can be friends with God, sons and daughters of the Father.

God is infinitely greater than we are. Speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God tells us, “...as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Is 55:9). In his great love for us God desires an intimate friendship with us. The Son and the Spirit came to bring about some possibility for us to participate in divine life so that we can be friends with him (2 Pt 1:4). Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness” (Phil 2:7). God the Son, to bring us closer to God, took on our very humanity. The Holy Spirit likewise descends and dwells in us to raise us up to God by infusing us with God’s own love, with charity.

If you look at the world around us today, the need for God’s love to dwell within us is practically being shouted from every corner of the world. Only God’s gift of charity can overcome our fallen tendency to pursue what appears to be good but in fact harms us and separates us from God.

That God desires to be friends with us and restore us to his family as sons and daughters should shock us and bring us immense joy! The mission of the Holy Spirit is to guide believers into this intimate friendship with the Father, just as Jesus always pointed to the Father in his time on Earth. Jesus calls us friends in the Gospel (Jn 15: 15). Just as human friends share the same thoughts and are united by the same interests, the Holy Spirit makes us friends with God by leading us to truth and unity. Truth, by allowing us to know the very thoughts of God, and unity, by uniting us to him in a bond of love.

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THE MISSION OF TRUTH

The Spirit leads us to truth. We live in a culture that says there is no truth—but then is fractured by the consequences of that lie. When everything is relative and we choose what is true for ourselves, chaos ensues. The suffering, hatred, and division in our world and country is a direct result of thinking that we determine what is true, what is right, and what is wrong. If truth does not exist, then it will be impossible to get everyone to agree on one thing because we will all choose our own desires, our own will, which will lead to conflict. We will fail to pray and mean the words in the Our Father, “thy will be done.”

Truth, though, exists and we don't get to decide what is true. God has made all things that exist; truth exists outside of us, and we will only find our personal fulfilment and societal peace when we choose to seek the truth. Jesus promises that we are not alone in this endeavor. He tells his disciples that he will send them the Spirit and that the Spirit will guide them into all truth (Jn 16:13).

The truth taught by the Holy Spirit includes all of reality that God has made, but it is more than that. Jesus tells us that he himself is “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:16). The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, guides us to Jesus by reminding us of all that Jesus told us (Jn 14:26).

One of the greatest truths that we often forget is that God loves us as a Father (Jn 15:9). We can experience this love profoundly, only to forget it a short while later because we get distracted and stressed by work or family difficulties. The Spirit desires to constantly remind us of this truth, this truth that is so radical it changes how we see the world and ourselves, for we see all creation and every human being through the eyes and heart of the Father.

If we truly desire to be disciples, we must constantly ask the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth and to help us remember what Jesus taught his apostles. Because of the cloud of confusion created by the relativism of the world, we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit more than ever. The more we seek and live according to the truth of Jesus Christ, guided by the Spirit of Truth, the more we will be able to discern what in our culture is from God and what is the work of the Evil One.

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The Spirit also leads us to the unity that Christ prayed for at the Last Supper, “that all might be one, as you Father are in me and I am in you” (Jn 17:21). In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul speaks about the work of unity that was accomplished by Christ and is made present in our lives by the work of the Holy Spirit: while it is Christ who “broke down the dividing wall

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of enmity through his flesh” (Eph. 2:14) it is the Spirit who builds us “together into a dwelling place of God” (Eph. 2:22).

This mission of unity flows from the Holy Spirit’s place in the Trinity. The Spirit is the bond of love of the Father and the Son. Just as we are moved towards those we love—our spouses, children, family members—by the bond of love, so too does the Holy Spirit unite all disciples in love to one another and to God.

We see this unifying action in a profound way at Pentecost. In the upper room, the Spirit descends upon the apostles in tongues of fire. Inspired by the Spirit, these Galilean fishermen immediately went out to preach the message of reconciliation in Jerusalem. The city was filled with visitors from all over the known world at the time, but all the people could understand their words. As soon as the apostles received the Holy Spirit, the division of language that began at the Tower of Babel was healed. “So it was that men of every language joined in singing one song of praise to God, and scattered tribes, restored to unity by the Spirit, were offered to the Father as the firstfruits of all the nations” (St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* Bk. 3, 17.2). Around 3,000 believers, originally divided by language, were united with each other and with God that day (Acts 2:41).

Although we do not often see the Spirit working today in such a marvelous way, he still gives the gift of tongues to draw others to the Father. Once, while St. Dominic was travelling between the new communities he established, he came upon a group of German travelers. St.



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Dominic was Spanish and did not know German; the travelers did not know Spanish. For three days, however, St. Dominic received the gift of tongues so that he could share the Gospel message with his companions on the way. The Spirit still works to unify us and draw us to the Father.

Division based on language is real, but the Holy Spirit works in our day to heal the even deeper divide which is created by our sins. In his first appearance to the apostles after his resurrection, Jesus “breathed on them and said ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them and whose sins you retain are retained’ (Jn 20:22-23). The Holy Spirit works in our lives allowing us to forgive, both in Confession and in our hearts.

There are some in our culture today who think forgiveness is weakness or capitulating to evil; that it means accommodating people and views they disagree with. Others refuse to forgive those who deeply hurt them. I want to be very clear: a lack of forgiveness is not the way of the Gospel or a disciple of Jesus. It is a rejection of the Holy Spirit, who is sent “among us for the forgiveness of sins” as we hear in the words of absolution in Confession. Forgiveness heals and unites us, and it is a work that the Holy Spirit desires to do more of today. He wishes to repair wounds within the Church and outside of it as part of his mission of unity.

As we prepare for this Pentecost, let us ask the Holy Spirit to work through us so that we can be agents of forgiveness, healing, truth and unity in our world.

FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

So much of the suffering which the Holy Spirit desires to heal comes from our society’s rejection of God. People believe the promises of the Devil, that they can find happiness in the passing pleasures, fame, power or other types of worldly success. St. Paul told the Galatians, however, “the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom



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of God” (Gal. 5:19-22). The fulfillment brought about by the ways of the world is fleeting and illusory; and result in selfishness, hatred, and division that are sadly so common today.

But St. Paul also offers us the antidote to this toxic mix: “In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:23). Wouldn’t our world look much different if we invoked the Spirit, desired the Spirit, and allowed his fruits to grow in our lives? Too often today we hear that human beings are bound by their humanity, that we are incapable of change and of overcoming our weaknesses. We forget the power of the Gospel; that Jesus set free those who were bound captive by their stealing, by their adultery, by infirmities. When one reads the lives of the saints, one sees that many of them were great sinners before their encounter with God, but that they opened themselves to the transforming power of God and did not take their eyes off him. We are called to do the same today. Pope Francis often reminds us to pray to the Holy Spirit, to open our hearts to him so that we may know and live the joy of the Gospel, to share this joy with those who are still suffering because they are enslaved to the world and captured by the devil.



The Holy Spirit desires to set the world free and bring us into an intimate relationship with the Father. St. Paul told the Romans, “You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out ‘Abba, Father’” (Rom 8:15). With the many assaults on the family by our modern culture, many people today do not realize what it means to be a daughter or son of the Father. The Holy Spirit guides us into the secure love of this relationship, and when we experience the freedom of being God’s beloved sons and daughters the fruits of the Spirit will flourish in our lives. We will be joyful, patient, and kind. We will bring forgiveness, peace, love, and faith wherever we go. We will be examples of generosity, gentleness, and self-control.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In our hearts, we truly desire the fruits of the Holy Spirit, but do we ask the Spirit for them? Do we ask the Spirit for his seven-fold gifts so that the fruits manifest in our lives and so that we can live in intimate friendship with the Father? We might fear the unknown, not even daring to ask, “how will my life change if I really receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit? What will happen to me?” There is no need to be afraid! God knows exactly what we need and will

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only give us what is for our own good. As Jesus told the crowds, “if you who are wicked know how to give good gifts, how much more will your heavenly father give good things to those who ask him?” (Lk 11:13). We have already received these good gifts when we were Confirmed, but too often we do not call upon the gifts of the Holy Spirit and they remain seeds within us and do not grow into fruits. The Spirit gives us these gifts so that we can grow in intimacy with our heavenly Father and one another. The gifts of the Holy Spirit allow us to be receptive to his promptings, which move us to think and see according to the ways of God.

The gift of wisdom allows us to be moved by the Holy Spirit to affirm things about God with delight and truth. The gift of knowledge makes us receptive to the movements of the Holy Spirit to affirm things about created reality in light of their deepest causes. If you have ever been struck by the beauty of the mountains and then moved to consider God and how he made them, that was the Holy Spirit moving you through the gift of knowledge. The gift of understanding opens us to

the promptings of the Holy Spirit so that we can understand the signs given to us by God in the scriptures, the liturgy, and the sacraments. The gift of counsel makes us receptive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to discern the right moral choice in each situation and to act upon that.

The gift of fortitude strengthens us to follow the Holy Spirit in demanding situations, helping us to withstand any difficulty that may cause us to deviate from the path of doing good, even to the point of shedding our blood for Christ. The gift of piety opens us up to the movement of the Holy Spirit so that we can feel and act as children of God. Finally, the gift of the fear of the Lord makes us receptive to a reverential awe of God, whereby we fear anything that would put distance between him and us.

Through these seven gifts, we are led to a deeper friendship and unity with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God freely, readily, and abundantly gives us these gifts to draw us to himself; I pray that we do not set them aside, putting them on a shelf! Rather, may we call upon them

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and use them in our daily lives to become the saints that God desires us to be.

CONCLUSION

As we prepare to celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, I encourage you all to pray for these gifts and fruits. Ask the Holy Spirit for an abundant outpouring of whatever gift you need the most to grow in friendship with God. As we move closer to becoming an archdiocese that exists in an apostolic mission way, my hope is that we all come to a greater intimacy with the Holy Spirit so that we may follow his promptings to bring the joy and hope of the Gospel to those most in need, those who are bound by sin and death, who are suffering because they have been tricked into following the ways of the world and the evil one more than the saving truth of Jesus Christ.

To make our hearts a fruitful soil for the Holy Spirit this Pentecost, I am asking all the faithful of the Archdiocese of Denver to join me in praying the following Novena for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit from Friday, May 27th to Saturday, June 4th. Set aside time each day to pray the novena, going with Mary and the apostles to that quiet upper room longing for the Holy Spirit. May this Pentecost draw you deeper in friendship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and fill you with the joy of the Gospel.

Come Holy Spirit, that we may intimately know the love of the Father and love him in return!

Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ,

Most Reverend Samuel J. Aquila, S.T.L.

Archbishop of Denver

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NOVENA TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Adapted from the Novenas found on Adoremus.org and Angeluspress.org.

End each day with the following prayer for all seven gifts:

O Lord Jesus Christ who, before ascending into heaven, promised to send the Holy Spirit to finish your work in the souls of your apostles and disciples, be pleased to grant the same Holy Spirit to me that he may perfect in my soul the work of your grace and love. Grant me the spirit of wisdom, that I may despise the perishable things of this world and aspire only after the things that are eternal; the spirit of understanding to enlighten my mind with the light of your divine truth; the spirit of counsel that I may ever choose the surest way of pleasing God and gaining heaven; the spirit of fortitude that I may bear my cross with you and that I may overcome all obstacles that oppose my salvation; the spirit of knowledge that I may know God and know myself in him; the spirit of piety that I may find the service of God sweet and pleasurable; the spirit of fear of the Lord that I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God and may dread in any way to offend him. Animate me in all things with your spirit. Amen.

Day 1, May 27: Prayer for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

*Holy Spirit, Lord of Light,
from the clear celestial height,
thy pure beaming radiance give.*

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your divine love. Send forth your spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who has taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may always be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Day 2, May 28: Prayer for the Gift of Holy Fear

*Come thou father of the poor,
come with treasures which endure,
come thou light of all that live.*

Come, O blessed Spirit of Holy Fear, penetrate my inmost heart, that I may set you, my Lord and God, before my face forever; help me to shun all things that can offend you, and make me worthy to appear before the pure eyes of your Divine Majesty in heaven, where you live and reign in the unity of the Blessed Trinity, God, world without end. Amen.

Day 3, May 29: Prayer for the Gift of Piety

*Thou of all consolers best,
visiting the troubled breast,
dost refreshing peace bestow.*

Come, O blessed Spirit of Piety, possess my heart. Implant in my soul filial love toward God my heavenly Father, and brotherly love for all, so that I may delight in the service of God and my neighbor. Amen.

Day 4, May 30: Prayer for the Gift of Fortitude

*Thou in toil art comfort sweet,
pleasant coolness in the heat,
solace in the midst of woe.*

Come of blessed Spirit of Fortitude, uphold my soul in time of trouble and adversity, sustain my efforts after holiness, strengthen my weakness, give me courage against all the assaults of my enemies, that I may never be overcome and separated from you, my God and greatest Good. Amen.

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Day 5, May 31: Prayer for the Gift of Knowledge

*Light immortal, light divine,
visit thou these hearts of thine,
and our inmost being fill.*

Come, O blessed Spirit of Knowledge, and grant that I may perceive the will of the Father; show me the nothingness of earthly things, that I may realize their vanity and use them only for your glory and my own salvation, looking ever beyond them to you and your eternal rewards. Amen.

Day 6, June 1: Prayer for the Gift of Understanding

*If thou take thy grace away,
nothing pure in man will stay;
all his good is turned to ill.*

Come, O Spirit of Understanding, and enlighten our minds that we may know and believe all the mysteries of salvation; and may merit at last to see the eternal light in your light; and in the light of glory to have a clear vision of you, the Father, and the Son. Amen.

Day 7, June 2: Prayer for the Gift of Counsel

*Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
on our dryness pour thy dew;
wash the stains of guilt away.*

Come, O Spirit of Counsel, help and guide me in all my ways, that I may always do your holy will. Incline my heart to that which is good; turn it away from all that is evil and direct me by the straight path of your commandments to that goal of eternal life for which I long. Amen.

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Day 8, June 3: Prayer for the Gift of Wisdom

*Bend the stubborn heart and will,
melt the frozen, warm the chill,
guide the steps that go astray.*

Come, O Spirit of Wisdom, and reveal to my soul the mysteries of heavenly things, their exceeding greatness, power, and beauty. Teach me to love them above and beyond the passing joys and satisfactions of earth. Help me to attain them and possess them forever. Amen.

Day 9, June 4: Prayer for the Fruits of the Holy Spirit

*Thou on those who evermore,
thee confess and thee adore,
in thy sevenfold gift descend.*

*Give them comfort when they die,
give them life with thee on high,
give them joys which never end.*

Come, O Divine Spirit, fill my heart with your heavenly gifts: your charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, that I may never weary in the service of God, but by continued faithful submission to your inspiration may merit to be united eternally with you in the love of the Father and the Son. Amen.