

- St. Augustine once prayed: "O Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into my heart. Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling and scatter there Thy cheerful beams."
- As we come upon this most solemn feast of Pentecost, I am reminded of the intimacy God wishes to share with us. As St. Augustine teaches us in this quote, we have a God Who is willing to dwell within our hearts!
- He is a God who enlightens us with His Spirit, dispelling our darkness. Indeed, this God of ours loves us so much that He comes to live within us in His Spirit. And when He does live within us, His Holy Spirit has power to transform our minds and hearts.
- Our Lord first comes to live within us, of course, through baptism – imparting to us His sanctifying grace, the grace that saves us.
- While we can daily receive our Lord Jesus into ourselves through the reception of Holy Communion, the Holy Spirit comes to us in a very particular way through the Sacrament of Confirmation. And when He comes to us, the Spirit sanctifies us; He makes us holy.
- Though He finds us in a state of deformity because of sin, whether original or personal, the Holy Spirit has the power to restore us to man's original beauty, filling us with grace while freeing us from sin and death.
- **On** Ash Wednesday, as Lent begins, we are reminded so poignantly that we are dust, and unto dust we shall return. Yet now, at Pentecost, we men of dust are transformed into the sons of God, sharers in His divine glory who bear a likeness to the eternal Son!
- By the power of the Spirit, especially His power at work through the Sacraments, we are made capable of not only being the dwelling place of God, but we are rendered worthy of reigning with God for all eternity.
- Yet there is a caveat of which we must be acutely aware: we receive the Holy Spirit's grace only in proportion to our readiness to receive it!
- In other words, the sorrier and more contrite we are for our sins, the greater the graces we receive in confession. The hungrier and more desirous we are for the Bread of Eternal Life, the greater the graces of Holy Communion.
- The greater our desire to live our faith out in the world with integrity and zeal, the more deeply rooted the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit become at Confirmation.
- So, while the Sacraments confer grace independently of us, the effect of the graces will vary according to our disposition as we receive them.
- In other words, the more open and receptive we are to the working of the Holy Spirit in the Sacraments, the greater effect the Sacraments will have upon our souls!
- If we are inattentive, slothful, hard of heart, tepid in our love for our Lord, or lukewarm in our faith about the power of the Sacraments, then the grace that we receive through them will be less effective.
- Think of the Last Supper for a moment. All 12 apostles received our Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion that night. Yet in his greed and malice, Judas still committed history's most heinous sin immediately afterwards. The grace didn't penetrate him.
- The Sacraments are not like a medicine that works independently of our attitude. They don't change us automatically.
- The Sacraments are more like gifts that we can choose to unwrap and utilize – or not. If on Christmas morning we refuse to open all the gifts under our tree, the gifts were still given to us; we've just chosen not to accept them.

- You see, God never imposes Himself upon us. He waits for us to invite Him in, to yield and submit to Him. This is why, if we are going to be Christ's true disciples and intimate friends, we must pursue Him and learn to unite our will to His will.
- We must learn to seek what He wants for us, no matter what the cost.
- Providentially, this morning we have two young men – two brothers – who are being received into the Church and confirmed, and who will make their 1st Communion.
- Luke & Levi, today you two will receive an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Today, He will seal within you His 7 gifts: wisdom, knowledge, counsel, piety, understanding, courage, and the fear of the Lord. And you will receive our Lord for the 1st time in Holy Communion.
- This Mass is a moment of tremendous grace for you, a huge milestone in your life of Christian discipleship that your parents have graciously nurtured within you. But you must choose how you will utilize this grace by how well you conform yourselves to God's will.
- For the more willing we are to follow God's will as best we know it, the more penetrating God's grace will be within us. And if we allow God's grace to penetrate us enough, we might even become a saint.
- Yet, when we begin to prove ourselves to be God's close friends by our willingness to follow His will, it is then that God so often allows us to be tested. As He wishes to know how true our friendship is, God will allow some suffering to befall us to test our resolve.
- For many years now, our parish has sought to please and glorify our Lord through our reverent liturgies, our fidelity to Church teaching, and our charitable outreach to the poor.
- And we've been mightily blessed by our Lord. We are a thriving parish blessed with youthful and generous families. We've been blessed with a beautiful church building and campus. We've been blessed with vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life.
- Just yesterday we had two of our own young men in this parish ordained as deacons, and we have several more following behind them.
- But I know that most of you have been following what's going on in our diocese, and you know that the specter of suffering is looming for our parish. Not only are we going to lose the Latin Mass, which has brought so much edification and beauty to our parish, but even the traditional style of worship we've enjoyed for many years is in jeopardy.
- As I mentioned in my homily two Sundays ago, we must decide how we're going to handle whatever painful changes come our way. Obviously, as the situation with our diocese has gotten so much press coverage, lots of people are watching us.
- It's vitally important, for the good of our parish and the good of our diocese, that we respond as faithful Christians and loyal sons and daughters of the Church. As I said 2 weeks ago, anger and bitterness must find no place in our hearts.
- And we must turn to the Holy Spirit, asking Him as did St. Augustine, that He descend into our hearts to dispel our darkness and fill us with His "cheerful beams." We must pray to the Spirit for Wisdom and Understanding so we might speak prudently about this situation.
- We must pray to the Spirit for Courage so we might bear whatever crosses He allows. We must pray to the Spirit for a proper Fear of the Lord, so that we might always act according to His will – and not our own. Remember: moments of hardship define our character.
- Yet, let us not fail to pray to the Holy Spirit to protect our style and manner of worship, which we know to be true, good, and beautiful.
- With God all things are possible. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, our prayers, sacrifices, and our charitable response can bring about a change in this situation.
- While we will always be well-known for the beauty of our church, I want us to be well-known for the beauty of our virtue as a parish. May the Holy Spirit descend into the hearts of us all, enlightening our darkness, and scattering His cheerful beams. St. Augustine, pray for us.