

- As the end of the Easter Season and Pentecost draw near, our readings speak to us about the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- In our first reading we hear about the Samaritan Pentecost, with the Holy Spirit falling upon a group of people who were maligned and held in contempt by most Jews of Jesus' day.
- And in the 2nd reading St. Peter reminds us that, though we be maligned and held in contempt for our Christianity, we will be raised to eternal life with Christ through the Holy Spirit.
- Interestingly, while the Gospel teaches us about the coming of the Holy Spirit, it also gives us a primer on obedience, showing us that the love of God and obedience to the law of God go hand-in-hand.
- St. Francis de Sales once said, "Many religious and others have become saints without meditation, but without obedience no one."
- And he's not alone in stressing the importance of obedience. The famous Carmelite mystic from Florence, St. Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi, said that: "A little drop of simple obedience is worth a million times more than a whole vase full of the choicest contemplations."
- So why is this? Because simple *dis*obedience is what got humanity into trouble in the first place in the Garden of Eden! And ever since that original sin of our first parents, man has struggled with a disordered desire to command rather than obey.
- We like things our own way, don't we? Of course we do. Yet sadly, our way is not always God's way, is it? When left to our own devices, it becomes very easy to choose against God and His commandments in some manner in order to satisfy ourselves.
- Yet, when we *can* resist the temptation to put our will above God's will, we help mitigate the terrible consequences of original sin. In some small measure we help repair the damage done by our first parents – at least within ourselves.
- Regarding obedience, in our Gospel passage today, Jesus says: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." And later He says: "Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me."
- What we must understand is that Jesus isn't talking simply about the 10 Commandments or the teachings of the Church. He's speaking a bit more broadly.
- While following the 10 Commandments and the teachings of the Church is the important first step to loving God, learning to love and obey God goes well beyond merely following rules.
- To be wholly obedient to God and to truly keep His commands, we must learn to humbly submit our wills to the will of the Father.
- It is only when we seek His will above our own that we can really grow in holiness.
- Understand that the life of the Christian is essentially a life of humble sacrifice, a life of sacrifice to the Father. We are called to a life of unselfishness, giving ourselves completely to the Father by loving Him with all our hearts, and by loving our neighbor as ourselves.
- You see, my friends, God desires that each and every one of us make an act of the will – to make a "leap of faith" – to trust Him and love Him above all else.
- He wants us to choose to love Him and to trust Him.
- Recognizing that our human nature is often weak and selfish, our Lord sent His Holy Spirit to help us make this act of the will, this "leap of faith", to love and trust Him as we should.

- St. Augustine once described the Holy Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son. He is Love Itself. And the good news is that in the Gospel today, Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to be with us always!
- We know that the Holy Spirit was first sent to mankind at Pentecost, when He came down upon our Lady and the apostles in tongues of flame. This is something that our Church will celebrate in just a couple of weeks with the great Solemnity of Pentecost.
- Today man is graced by the Holy Spirit through the sacraments. While it is Christ whom we receive in the sacraments, all of the sacraments operate through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Of course, the sacrament that is most associated with the Holy Spirit is confirmation. Confirmation completes our baptism by deepening and strengthening the grace we first received in our baptism.
- Confirmation also deepens our union with Christ and gives us a special grace to confess the Christian faith, even to the point of suffering for the faith. It is the sacrament of confirmation that actually gives us the grace to be a martyr if necessary!
- In confirmation the Holy Spirit, who is the bond of love between the persons of the Holy Trinity, strengthens us and configures us ever more closely to Jesus Christ. By becoming closer to Christ, our desire to make that act of the will to love God grows stronger within us.
- The more that we choose to live in the love of God by submitting ourselves to His holy will, and the more that we seek to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit that have been given to us through the sacraments, the greater our capacity to love God grows.
- Ultimately, what we learn from the Gospel today is that love has a price. Truly loving God requires that we submit to Him, that we obey Him.
- Yet the Gospel today also teaches us that God more than repays us if we choose to be obedient to Him out of love. Not only will our Lord love us in return, but He will reveal Himself to us! He tells us that He will not leave us orphans, but that He will come to us.
- But understand that our obedience is not only a measure of our love for God. It's also a measure of our faith and hope in Him, and a means of growing in humility.
- Letting go of our own will to follow His will requires that we trust that God knows what's best for us. It requires relinquishing the proud attachment so many of us have to our own opinions, which is what makes obedience so difficult in the first place.
- But when we can be obedient to God's will rather than insisting upon our own, when we learn to trust in God and make Him the sole object of our hope through our obedience to His will, it is then that we prove our love for Him.
- If you are concerned that you do not love God enough or if you struggle being obedient to Him, then turn to the Holy Spirit, who first came to dwell within you at your baptism and who came to strengthen you in your faith at your confirmation.
- For it is the Holy Spirit who will enflame our hearts with God's grace so that we can indeed make an act of the will to love, to trust, and to obey our Lord as we should.
- And as we learn to love and obey our Lord as we should, let us trust the words of Jesus who said in the Gospel today, "whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." Could we ever ask for anything more?