

- Six years ago in 2020 we weren't allowed to have a public Easter Vigil because of the pandemic lockdown. So, we made the decision to celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation for that year's OCIA class on the Vigil of Pentecost. And it was a most magnificent evening.
- At that point we were 2 ½ months into the pandemic, and though we had been having public Masses for a few weeks by then, there was still a lot of pent-up fear and frustration, lots of unknowns, and lots of desire for things to return to normal.
- Moreover, George Floyd had been killed just days before in Minneapolis, and riots were erupting all around our country. People were on edge.
- Yet it's a Pentecost I remember, not so much for the riots and pandemic, but because the fruits of the Holy Spirit seemed so palpable in this church that night. Love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control were everywhere.
- While the rest of the world was careening toward self-destruction, it felt like we were ensconced in a bubble of holiness and peace, separated – at least for a time – from worldly cares and anxieties. From those fruits it was clear that night that the Holy Spirit was present with us. It's a night I'll never forget.
- Once again today the Church celebrates this great feast of Pentecost, commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon our Lady and the Apostles 9 days after our Lord's ascension into Heaven.
- And it is the Spirit Himself who prepares *us* for Heaven. The Father is the one who created us and this world that we live in. It is the Son – Jesus Christ – who redeems us by His suffering and death on the cross. But it is the Spirit who sanctifies us and makes us holy.
- Indeed, all of the saints that we honor in the Church today became saints because of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.
- It was the Holy Spirit Who filled the apostles with the zeal and courage necessary not only to preach the Gospel, but to endure the concomitant hardships that came along with preaching the Gospel, and even to die for it.
- In the same way the Holy Spirit has worked powerfully through every martyr of the Church, filling them with the fortitude to lay down their lives in testimony to Christ and His Church.
- The Holy Spirit has worked through confessors to preach, through virgins to stay pure, through pastors to lead, and through everyday men and women to be models of holiness.
- It was the Holy Spirit Who filled the saints with the virtues of faith, hope, and charity so that they could live out our Catholic faith with integrity and fulfill God's will. In short, it was the Holy Spirit Who made the saints *saints*.
- If we wish to be saints ourselves, then we need the Holy Spirit. The good news is that, if we have been baptized and confirmed, then we have received the Holy Spirit in the same way as the apostles did at that first Pentecost.
- While there may not have been any tongues of flame or strong rushing winds at our Confirmation, we know by faith that the Sacrament of Confirmation is our own personal Pentecost! Through the sacraments the seeds of holiness are sown within us.
- Yet, the Spirit does more than just make us holy.
- He fills us with His gifts of wisdom, knowledge, counsel, understanding, piety, courage, and fear of the Lord. He consoles us in our grief, guides us in times of uncertainty, and strengthens us with courage when life gets difficult.

- Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, as the Spirit of Truth, guiding the Church to all truth. He is the abiding presence in our souls Who comforts, guides, and enlightens us to God's will and endows us with the grace to follow that will despite the hardships in doing so.
- As St. Paul assures us, the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness – praying within us and interceding for us (cf. Romans 8:26), thereby strengthening us so that we can overcome our sins, live according to God's will, and hopefully become saints.
- Earlier I mentioned the pandemic of 6 years ago, which was a most complicated and difficult time for us all. Yet, our Lord in His goodness brought us through it marvelously, guiding us in this parish so that could find creative ways to make the sacraments available.
- Though we kept our church open and available for prayer, and while our parish resumed worshipping together much more quickly than other churches, we didn't have one Covid death at St. Ann's. Dumb luck? No, it was the Spirit.
- Of course, this past year has had its share of difficulties for our parish as well. In fact, it was precisely one year ago on Memorial Day weekend that news began leaking out about the restrictions on the Latin Mass and all the liturgical changes coming to our diocese.
- Since then, we've been through lots of changes and uncertainty, lots of liturgical heartache. Yet, I can also tell you that – personally – as your pastor, I very much have felt the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- As I've prayed to the Holy Spirit for help in what to say and do to keep our parish on track, He's inspired me with insights and directed my actions. Even more so, the Holy Spirit has been a balm to my wounds and granted me a great deal of peace.
- And you have responded so beautifully! I so appreciate your confidence and obedience. And look where we are as a parish. We are growing and thriving, with much to celebrate.
- As I look back on the past couple of months, I see so clearly the Spirit's hallmarks. For example, we had a glorious Holy Week and Easter Season this year.
- Our liturgies and celebrations like the Easter Vigil, Divine Mercy, Confirmation, 1st Holy Communion, and most recently our Rosary procession for Our Lady of Fatima have been imbued with the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – much like the Vigil of Pentecost in 2020.
- My point? While we always have the Holy Spirit with us, in times of change and upheaval, the Holy Spirit is especially quick to come to our aid and fill us with His fruits if we just let Him. This is why difficult times are always opportunities to grow in virtue and holiness.
- Suffering of any type is always an opportunity to be sanctified by our Lord, if we lean into our sorrows with faith in God's goodness, with hope for salvation, and with great love for our Lord Who suffered and died for us.
- Brothers and sisters, are you suffering in any way right now? Do you feel the weight of the cross upon your shoulders? If so, pray to the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of Peace and the Sanctifier, and ask Him to come to you.
- Lean into your cross with a grateful heart, knowing that God the Father has allowed it for your good, and that God the Son will strengthen you by His grace to carry it well.
- And when you do this, then God the Holy Spirit will fill you with His fruits: love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- On this glorious Pentecost Sunday, let's all resolve to trust the Holy Spirit more, to call upon Him especially in our sufferings, and to allow Him to fill us with Himself. May the Holy Spirit console us, guide us, inspire us, and sanctify us all.