

[Readings: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:20b-25; John 10:1-10]

Have you ever been in a public place where you swear you hear someone calling out your name? You even recognize the voice as someone familiar. Then as you look up or look around, or look behind, you realize one of three things:

- 1) No one was calling out your name at all; you were just hearing things.
- 2) They were calling out your name, but not calling out to you; they were calling out to someone else who shares your name.
- 3) They thought you were someone else, and, once realizing their mistake, looking embarrassed, they keep walking!

Jesus often uses shepherd and sheep imagery to refer to you and to me. A bad shepherd is one who is only in it for what profits him personally. If any danger or risk arises, he runs away from the sheep he is hired to protect, exposing the sheep to the danger of attack by wild animals or the risk of being stolen by other humans.

Jesus as the Good Shepherd will never let that happen to us. He is the “gate.” In the time of Jesus, sheep were herded into a pen or cave at night for safety. Most pens or caves had no door to open and close, so the shepherd slept across the opening. If any sheep wandered over his body, he could move it back. If a thief or animal came near, the Good Shepherd would drive them away.

A third aspect of the shepherd/sheep relationship is that sheep, although easily led and misled, usually only move when they hear, recognize and follow the voice of the shepherd assigned to them. When a large group of shepherds gather together while the sheep graze indiscriminately in the field, the sheep mix and mingle with each other. When it is time to leave, all the shepherd has to do is cry out. The sheep that are his instinctively follow his voice and none other. The sheep split into their respective groups and follow only their shepherd. Now THAT is “voice recognition!”

Do you really believe Christ knows Your name? When do you hear Him calling you? Do you recognize HIS voice? Do you find yourselves these days wandering about like lost, aimless sheep? In this time of the COVID-19 Pandemic, do you feel that you no longer have control over your life, your daily routine, even your health? Seek the Good Shepherd Who is waiting at the gate to guide you in and out!

Are you at an impasse in your spiritual growth or in your path of emotional healing or while still in a difficult relationship? Do you need a breakthrough? Do you feel stuck behind a fence that's keeping you on the outside of peace, joy, satisfaction, or healing? This Sunday's Gospel reading tells us that Jesus is the gate in that fence. He helps us reach the heavenly side of the gate, outside the realm of earthly restrictions -- not only when we die and enter eternal life, but also here and now in our earthly life, so that we might always "have life and have it more abundantly." This is another one of my favorite Gospel passages: "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

How good are you at recognizing the voice of the Lord in your life? Does it come through loud and clear, or is it distorted by the noise of your life? Are there too many other competing voices of work and worry and family and commitments for you to hear God's words to you? Or are you able to hear those whispered words of God in and through your work and family and daily living?

When our path seems blocked, we can only make progress by letting Jesus shepherd us around and through and over the obstacles. I am feeling this after repeated failure while applying for those Paycheck Protection Programs. Either it's too late, or they have run out of funds that would have helped our parish for the next two months. But faith tells me that if people shut a door on something that God wants us to do, Jesus is still our open gate and no one can close Him out of our lives. He will lead us into a new opportunity for accomplishing the plans of God. We must look at Jesus and see Him as a gate that opens into a new direction or location.

In a recent teleconference with the priests of the Archdiocese, Archbishop Allen Vigneron reminded us that in spite of the severe financial crisis the Archdiocese and many parishes are facing, we cannot go back from Mission to Maintenance. As he concluded the teleconference with a closing prayer, he choked up and almost broke down, realizing the enormity of the challenges that still lie ahead for us. Pray for him, and for all priests on this Good Shepherd Sunday! I think he is the best Archbishop we have had here in fifty years!

What breakthroughs are YOU hoping for? What's frustrating you and seems hopeless? What's causing you to think that a problem you're facing might lead to

disaster and destruction? Think of a time from the past when you experienced obstacles and Jesus provided a breakthrough that led to victory.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is both the Good Shepherd and the gate by which we enter the sheepfold. Baptized into Christ, we learn to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd. He speaks in the Sacred Scriptures, He calls out to us in those who suffer from sickness and poverty, he is present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Jesus, however, is also the gate by which we enter the protected space of the sheepfold. Through baptism, we belong to Christ's body, becoming members of the Church. Our continued salvation, our liberation from evil, unfolds through a common life with one another. The sheep belong to one another; they are saved together.

And when we belong to one another, when we love our fellow sheep, we should expect to suffer. St. Peter makes this clear in our Second Reading. Christ's life was the totality of gift, of communion, of relationship with men and women. When he was maltreated by the human family, He did not return violence for violence.

Perhaps this is the hardest thing for us Christians to learn. When we're attacked, we want to respond with violence. This desire to inflict punishment on those who harm us is the root of sin. It is also the stem of a social life governed by the logic of the world in which might defeats right, prestige overpowers poverty, and there's always someone to blame if you look hard enough. Scroll through Twitter and see this logic on display.

This is not how the Good Shepherd governs the sheepfold. He empties Himself, preferring not power but humility, poverty over self-importance and forgiveness over blame. During COVID-19, it's this being in the sheepfold, that we miss the most. Christ did not come to save individuals alone but to create a people, a Mystical Body, a temple of the Spirit that renews the human family. It is unnatural, but necessary, for us to be physically separated from each other, but we are still joined in spirit. Someone told me today, "the churches may be closed, but the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, is still open, alive and kicking!"

Going without the Eucharist, without common worship among the People of God, is so painful because we are meant to be together. We are common sheep (bishop, priest and the baptized alike), governed by a common shepherd, who forms us in a common way of life. And yet in our absence, the voice of the shepherd calls us home.

Soon, the Good Shepherd will gather us in his arms, feed us, pour lavish oil, tend to us once more.

What a feast that will be, among our community of beloved sheep! I'm hoping for Pentecost Sunday on May 31<sup>st</sup>, that we can celebrate if not in person, then via media.

Remember, however, that until we get all the way through this gate, we must stick close to him like sheep. There's a journey to take before we can reach the other side of the fence.

The thief that comes to steal and slaughter can only reach us when we stray away from Jesus and we take our eyes off of him.

Despair and worry are two common thieves, robbing us of peace, joy, satisfaction, and healing. But they're not as powerful as they pretend to be. We defeat them easily by remembering that they do not speak the full truth. The truth is: Jesus is our Good Shepherd safely guiding us into a life of abundant victory! ALLELUIA!  
AMEN!

[Readings: Acts 6:1-7; Psalm 33; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12]

The loss of the sacramental life during COVID-19 has been a wound for baptized Catholics and the ordained clergy. Yes, Our Lord is present in the Scriptures. Yes, we can perceive the glory of God in the created order. Yes, our God is made manifest in those who hunger and thirst on our streets, in the sick and dying in our communities.

We have not been abandoned. God dwells among us.

And yet, the cult or worship of the sacramental life, especially the Eucharist, is integral to Catholic life. Plunged into the saving waters of salvation, anointed with the oil of sanctity, we are called to eat and drink Christ's Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist.

This is no normal eating and drinking. For in this sacrament, it is Christ who comes to consume us. We belong to Him, all of us, one body in Christ.

This is underlined in our Second Reading today. Jesus is the living stone, rejected by all.

Yet, through the eyes of God, this stone was recognized for what it was -- the foundation of a spiritual temple, a gathering of all the nations made to worship God.

The First Letter of Peter, though, doesn't stop there. It is the Christian people that are to become a living temple. You laity are spiritual priests, made to sanctify the world, offering up your very lives in a sacrifice of praise to the glory of God. Just as an ordinary stone becomes consecrated to God, so your human flesh has been sanctified, dedicated to a holy task.

In this sense, worship has not stopped in the Church. It can't. When Christian families assemble in their homes, offering as best they can the sacrifice of praise through the Liturgy of the Hours or the Rosary or other forms of prayer, they exercise the priesthood intrinsic to their lives. You are made to glorify God, to become bedazzled stones of virtue in a spiritual temple. Like the seven deacons chosen in Acts, your priestly worship will unfold through feeding the hungry and caring for the widow. Such a priesthood is what it means, in the end, to be baptized into Christ.

And yet, it is for this reason, that we miss the Eucharist.

The baptized priesthood is not some incomplete or partial priesthood, fulfilled only in ordination.

The Eucharistic sacrifice is the work of this spiritual temple. The ordained, acting in the person of Christ and in the name of the Church, offers this sacrifice. And yet the baptized, all of the laity, are offered on that altar. You are made for this sacrifice; it is part of your very being.

If you miss it, long for it, wonder when you can participate in this sacrifice in the flesh rather than mediated through a computer or TV screen, when you can receive Christ's Body and Blood once more, you are manifesting your identity as living stones in a temple made for divine worship.

Of course, this worship is happening even when you're not there personally. It's happening because you are fasting for the common good. That you long to be there, that you miss Mass enough to tune in on to a high-tech video Mass or a poorly done You Tube video from the comfort of your homes, it is just living stones being living stones!

And now, a few words about family, motherhood and Mary, our Blessed Mother.

In our First Reading, we see that in the first decades of the Early Church, as the early Christian community grew, various needs and even conflicts sometimes called for a redefinition and restructuring of ministries. Because of this adaptation to cultural needs, "The word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly;" I had to chuckle when I read the next line, "Even a large number of priests were becoming obedient to the faith." Isn't it great to have priests who are obedient to the faith?!"

The Good News is that however the family finds itself, our biological families and the family of faith, the possibility is there for us to become "living stones," as St. Peter says in today's Second Reading. "Let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

However healthy or dysfunctional family life has been or is, whatever blessings or mistakes have happened, they become the brick and mortar that form the foundation of our homes and become part of the living Kingdom of God already here on earth.

Our Gospel shows us the process of finding answers to our questions about life and about faith. We are presented with some of the most moving, inspiring words of John's Gospel. I have turned to these words in some of the darker days and moments of my own life:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God, have faith also in me."

The answers to our questions are revealed when Jesus Christ tells us that this life isn't all that there is. That our priorities point to Heaven and to eternity, and not simply to human existence on earth.

Mothers both know and yet do not completely know everything about their children -- this was especially the case for Mary. That God chose her from among all women to be the Mother of the Savior was a mystery that, during her earthly life, she never entirely understood. In his Gospel, St. Luke tells us that Mary pondered, or meditated upon, this mystery in her heart. To look at Him, her Son Jesus was in every respect fully human, except that unlike us He never committed any sin. Yet He was also fully God, which He revealed in the many teachings, signs and miracles He worked in His public ministry.

We thank God for the way our mothers did and continue to provide answers for us. We forgive our mothers who need forgiving, who somehow fell short or fall short of their sacred identity and sacred mission. We lift up in prayer those mothers who have lost children, regardless of age, or who wanted to have children but could not. We thank God for those women in our lives who reveal the love, the devotion and the sacrifice of a mother, who shower us with the grace of their love, their wisdom and their experience. We thank God for Mary, the Mother of Jesus, for loving all of us without exception as her adopted sons and daughters. We thank God for Holy Mother, the Church, who brings us sacramental life and grace, who guides us in good times and in bad, and who will be with us faithfully until the end of the ages. ALLELUIA and AMEN!

[Readings: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Psalm 66; 1 Peter 3:15-18; John 14:15-21]

I am so happy and relieved that Archbishop Allen Vigneron has lifted the Mass ban. You can go to the website and read my column in next Sunday's bulletin for all the details. The way we celebrate Mass will not look the same as before the Mass ban went into effect. This will be another change in our lives, another challenge to move out of our comfort zone, and to bring us closer to God and to one another as we continue to grow deeper in our faith.

How have these two months of quarantine and "Stay Home/Stay Safe" affected your faith? What has gotten you through these days of sacrifice and solitude? Send me an email and tell me: [frnz@smdeporres.com](mailto:frnz@smdeporres.com). Also, if you have any special needs or prayer requests.

I have found over the years that the Number One Reason people who are welcomed, baptized and received into the Catholic Church at the Great Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday evening is simple. They say, "I want what you have." They have seen our Catholic faith in action, our relationship with Jesus Christ, and they want to share in that themselves. Do we need a helper, an advocate, like those Apostles upon whom the Holy Spirit has not yet descended? Jesus uses a curious word here.

Some scholars translate the word as "Advocate." In Latin, it means, "to speak for someone, to plea on one's behalf." Literally, in Greek, it means, "to call alongside."

When do you and I call someone to be alongside us? When we are running a relay. When we are playing "Tag." When we want someone to accompany us. To walk alongside us when we go to the doctor for The News or to the hospital for The Procedure. To the funeral home to make arrangements, or as in the case of a husband and wife, to walk alongside each other down the aisle on their wedding day and on their entire married lives together.

Alisa Hope Wagner once said, "The Holy Spirit is like the wind. It can be gentle enough to stroke a leaf but hard enough to bend a tree."

How is the Holy Spirit working in your lives right now? Is it a gentle breeze or a powerful force? The Apostles and the disciples are fruitful in their ministry because they have someone alongside of them, in addition to the Holy Spirit. They have each other. We have each other here at St. Martin de Porres Parish.

Jesus is giving you the best partner ever. In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit is our "Advocate". Some scholars translate the word to "Counselor". In the original Greek, it means "called alongside". It's closely related to the verb "parakaleo" ("to call" or "summon") from which we get "Paraclete" as a name for the Holy Spirit. It referred to a legal assistant, a courtroom advocate. Jesus is telling us that the Holy Spirit is our legal assistant when we're falsely accused, misjudged, or wrongly condemned.

Notice that Jesus refers to our Advocate as the "Spirit of Truth." No matter what other people think about us, no matter what wrong things they say about us, no matter what opinions they have of us, God always knows the truth.

And the truth that sets us free from their bad attitudes is this: It's only God's opinion that really matters. And His opinion of us is better than we think it is! We judge ourselves more harshly than we should, and this is why we worry so much about how others are judging us. If we honestly examine our consciences, seek reconciliation with God for our sins during the Penance Rite at Mass or in the Sacrament of Confession, and strive to improve, then Jesus says to us what he said to other sinners: "I do not condemn you; go and sin no more."

Don't you sometimes wish that Jesus would come physically to your rescue when you're misjudged? He said that he will not leave us orphans -- His Holy Spirit will always be with us when we need to be defended, telling us the truth about our goodness. Even when we sin, the Spirit of Truth defends us to our heavenly Judge: "Look, this precious child really does want to be holy." To us, the Spirit says, "Let me teach you how to grow in holiness and avoid this sin." And to others, the Spirit says: "If you love me, love this good friend of mine."

How have you been unjustly accused and unfairly judged? Imagine what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Father about that. And to those who condemned you. What is he saying to you about you? Think of a time when God defended you. How did the Advocate manifest His help? Who learned more from it: you or your accusers?

You and I are now at the same place where Jesus and His Apostles are in today's Gospel. Between Jesus' departure from this earth and His return in glory at the Second Coming. What does this pastor, Jesus, say to his people when He is still with them but will be leaving them shortly? Jesus chooses His words and His advice carefully. What's the first thing He says in today's excerpt from His farewell speech? "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." What were HIS commandments? Love God. Love others. Love yourself. So simple to say. So difficult to live out.

We are becoming that "leaner, meaner church" that Pope Benedict XVI once spoke about. Not "meaner" in the sense of being mean, but "meaner" in the sense of becoming spiritually stronger, more fit. Now we need to figure out how to be an evangelical Church, as Pope Francis is challenging us to be. How to be what the new catch words are: intentional, joyful, missionary disciples. That's still our job title and our mission: you and I are to become intentional -- we freely choose to and want to do it; joyful -- we are happy to do it; missionary -- we are called to get out of bed, get off the couch, get off the pews and work; disciples -- students, learners, realizing that we still have so much to learn and to do! AMEN!



[Readings: Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47; Eph. 1:17-23; Matthew 28:16-20]

The lectionary book that contains the readings for Daily and Sunday Masses is composed in such a way that the First Reading from the Old Testament -- except during the season of Easter when this reading is taken from Acts -- functions as a type of image that is fulfilled in the Gospel.

On the feast of the Ascension, something strange happens. The first reading -- taken from Acts -- depicts the same event as the Gospel of Luke: the Ascension of Christ into Heaven. Luke and Acts, both written by St. Luke, although separated in our Bibles, originally were meant to be conceived as a single narrative, beginning with the conception of Jesus and concluding with Paul preaching in Rome. The original Gospel, Jesus Christ, the Word Made Flesh, is conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is then preached in the heart of the Roman Empire.

The bridge between Luke and Acts is the moment of today's Feast of the Ascension. Luke ends with the Ascension, while Acts picks up from there. Still, the difference between the two accounts reveals something about the meaning of the Ascension in our daily Christian living.

Both Luke and Acts open up with an address to a man named Theophilus. It is impossible for us to know the identity of this man, whose name means "friend of God" or "God-lover." It's possible that this man existed. It's also possible that the title is intended for every Christian reader who has become a friend of God through Jesus Christ. The Gospel is written as a direct address to each of us. For you and me. At our baptism, we became "friends of God" and "God lovers."

In Luke, the Ascension is an occasion of joy. The disciples, drawn together by Jesus, are told once more about the Resurrection, receive a promise of the Holy Spirit and are exhorted to stay in Jerusalem.

Jesus leads them to Bethany, a mile and a half from Jerusalem, then tells them to go back. Having worshipped the Lord and given him homage, they return to Jerusalem full of joy -- adoring the Lord in the Temple.

Acts tells the same story, but emphasizes the fear experienced by the disciples. The evangelist provides a summary of what Jesus had said in Luke. But now it is the disciples who are the protagonists of the account. In the account of the Ascension that we have in today's Gospel version from Matthew, one phrase jumps up at me every time I read it: "They worshipped, but they doubted."

These disciples of Jesus have been with Him for almost three years. Jesus tried His best to teach, to challenge, to invite through His signs and wonders faith in Him and in His Father. And what are their parting words to Him as He ascends into Heaven? "Have a nice trip. Thanks a lot for everything. We don't fully believe everything you said to us!" OY!

They want to know if Jesus definitely is going to establish the Kingdom. Not the Kingdom of Heaven, but an earthly political empire just like all the rest. He tells them it is not theirs to know. In Acts, Jesus is depicted as ascending into Heaven, disappearing from their presence. Luke mentions an ascent, but Acts is specific -- Jesus disappears in a cloud.

A detail is added in Acts not present in Luke. The disciples encounter two men dressed in white, which parallel Luke's version of the moment of the Resurrection. They tell the disciples that Jesus will come again, descending from the clouds.

For two months, we have been, in a sense, in the dark, in the fog, "in the clouds" with this COVID-19 pandemic, its consequences, and its power. Those of you who live together – families, couples – I'm glad to see that you haven't killed each other! What have you learned during these two months of quarantine? How has this experience deepened your faith life?

Some have told me that this experience has been like being in a monastery. More time for deeper prayer and getting close to Jesus and to each other. This time has been a time not only of restrictions and quarantine, but a time of grace and blessing for so many of us.

Of all the correspondence I have gotten since Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup> of March when all of this extraordinary time began, the one comment that stirred me to the

soul was this: Does God want us to live and be healthy or to take risks and possibly die? Someone wrote: “we should not be afraid to be a COVID-19 martyr in the practice of our faith and worship.” WOW! I am still struggling with that opinion. How about you?

For most of you, these two months have been a time of longing for the Lord in the Most Holy Eucharist, which many of you will be receiving for the first time today. Let our time here be like the time in today’s Gospel, when the apostles began to long for their Lord and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The departure of Christ has led to a new age, to the apostolic era in which Christ speaks now through the Church. He is still present; His voice resounds. But today it is not only the apostles, but all of us disciples who proclaim him now.

Likewise, the departure of Christ is not permanent. Christ will come again. The vocation of the Church, as we’ll learn next week on Pentecost, is to create the right conditions for this wonderfully glorious return. ALLELUIA AND AMEN!

[Readings: Isaiah 32:15-18; Psalm 122; Philippians 4:6-9; Matt. 5:1-12]

During these past ten weeks of pandemic, quarantine and Stay Home, Stay Safe, I have watched a lot of movies in the evenings on my basic cable. Two war movies that are among the better made films, and which I saw again in recent days are “Saving Private Ryan,” which came out in 1998, and Hacksaw Ridge, which came out in 2016.

Saving Private Ryan is a 1998 American epic war film directed by Steven Spielberg and written by Robert Rodat. Set during the Invasion of Normandy in World War II, the film is known for its graphic portrayal of war and for the intensity of its opening 27 minutes, which includes a depiction of the Omaha Beach assault during the Normandy landings. The film follows United States Army Rangers Captain John H. Miller and his squad as they search for a paratrooper, Private First Class James Francis Ryan, the last surviving brother of three servicemen killed in action. It faithfully portrays the words in the Gospel of John: “There is no greater love than for one to give up their life for another.”

Hacksaw Ridge is a 2016 biographical war drama film directed by Mel Gibson and written by Andrew Knight and Robert Schenkkan, based on the 2004 documentary *The Conscientious Objector*. The film focuses on the World War II experiences of Desmond Doss, an American pacifist combat medic who, as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, refused to carry or use a weapon or firearm of any kind. Doss became the first conscientious objector to be awarded the Medal of Honor, for service above and beyond the call of duty during the Battle of Okinawa.

Both movies are good films to view and to reflect upon on this Memorial Day. Saving Private Ryan became a catalyst for hundreds of thousands of war veterans who had bottled up inside themselves the horrifying memories of watching and experiencing war trauma in the front lines of combat. For the first time in decades, war veterans were able to form support groups and seek professional counseling. One counsellor said, “You are never healed from this trauma, but you learn to live with it in healthier ways.”

Hacksaw Ridge showed how even a conscientious objector to war and violence could prove himself noble, courageous and risk his own life to save others. He pulled dozens of men to safety by dragging their bodies to the edge of a plateau, tying ropes around their torsos and slowly lowering them to the ground troops and to safety. But his hell did not end at the Battle of Okinawa. Desmond Doss suffered decades of PTSD, affecting his wife and children.

Memorial Day began as “Decoration Day.” One tradition suggests that this tradition began with freed slaves decorating the graves of Union soldiers who fought and died during the Civil War. Another version suggests that the widows of deceased military and military veterans would visit the graves of their loved ones and decorate them with flowers. Our current tradition involves parades, prayers, playing American flags on the graves of our military dead and deceased veterans. And gathering in church on this day to remember the One Who gave up His life so that WE might have Eternal Life.

The readings for today’s Memorial Day Mass speak of the vision and the perfect paradise of true justice and lasting peace. Today’s holiday reminds us that freedom isn’t free and that peace comes at a terribly high price. We also remember during this time of pandemic, those domestic heroes: first responders, medical personnel, relatives and friends who have succumbed to the COVID-19 virus, and we pray for those who mourn their loss.

We face the challenge of being people of the Beatitudes, heard in today’s Gospel, and we take comfort in the words of St. Paul in his Letter to the Philippians: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things. And the God of peace will be with you.” AMEN!

[Readings: Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104; 1 Cor. 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23]

*Veni Sancte Spiritus!* Come, Holy Spirit! The title of today's Sequence, to be sung after the Second Reading and before the Gospel Acclamation, is an exuberant reminder of this robust and active feast we celebrate. There are four Sequences provided for four different feast days: Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, and Our Lady of Sorrows. You probably would recognize the Sequence for Our Lady of Sorrows – the "Stabat Mater" which we sing after each of the Stations of the Cross during Lent when we move from Station to Station.

I'm glad Michael sang the one for today's Feast of Pentecost. The Pentecost Sequence underscores for us that the primary actor on Pentecost is not any one of the fishermen apostles, bravely preaching in the streets of Jerusalem like they were born to it. Rather, the Sequence declares, it's the elusive Holy Spirit that sheds divine light on our gloomy reality, comforting and refreshing us, healing our wounds, renewing our strength, and washing our guilt away. And that's just for starters.

Can you imagine what the first Pentecost was like? What a contrast from what occurred only days earlier in one Gospel, and earlier the same day in another Gospel. Frightened apostles huddled in a locked upper room. A band of disciples watching Jesus ascend out of sight, with these farewell words to Jesus in their hearts, "They worshipped Him, but they doubted." Those same apostles, with Mary, the Blessed Mother of Jesus, then spending nine days ("Novena") waiting in prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Sounds like they had a nine-day quarantine of their own!

Today, the waiting is over! Inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Apostles, once considered simple and uneducated, are now speaking with great eloquence in a language everybody can understand! How is all of this possible? Through God's power, through open hearts and through a willingness to say "YES!" to God when we are challenged to radical change in our lives. How has this time of quarantine changed YOUR life? Have any attitudes or notions about life and about faith changed? Send me an email and let me know: [frnz@smdeporres.com](mailto:frnz@smdeporres.com).

Add to that guidance for all our straying steps, plus the bestowal of those seven gifts we once memorized to recite to our bishops on Confirmation day long ago. What are they? Wisdom. Understanding. Knowledge. Counsel. Fortitude. Reverence. Wonder and Awe in God's Presence, which we used to call Fear of the Lord. Cribbed from an ancient prophecy of Isaiah, this shower of gifts is available to all who acknowledge the indwelling Spirit. Do we believe this?

How often do we use our sevenfold blessings -- or any single aspect of it? We do it quite well at St. Martin de Porres Parish. Now we need the bold courage to proclaim it our homes, our schools, our work and in the marketplace.

This weekend, Archbishop Allen Vigneron is sending us his latest pastoral letter, which outlines the next stage of "Unleash the Gospel." He will also be sending to all the faithful the link

to a video introducing “Families of Parishes”, a second video narrating our missionary journey, a set of Frequently Asked Questions, and a link to a new “Family of Parishes” website. Please consult these resources to find out more information. I and all the pastors will be sent the same information as you will. More will come, I’m sure!

We may need fresh language to describe ancient understandings, but that doesn’t make the concepts themselves obsolete. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we believers do need to be penetrated by the Divine. Jesus has breathed His Spirit on his Church. This act can change everything, and it’s meant to. That same breath of God was given to us at our Baptism and at our Confirmation.

How do we need to see things differently and speak in a new language that everyone can understand in our Church and in our world? How can we take our different kinds of spiritual gifts, our different forms of service, and our different workings to “tell the Good News” of Jesus Christ? The Archbishop of Detroit, our Chief Shepherd, will lead the way and show us how!

Our RCIA candidates are with us today and for the next two weekends in their final stages of preparation to become fully initiated Catholics. Let us be examples of faith, hope and loving acts of kindness to help them on their way. ALLELUIA and AMEN!

### *The Pentecost Sequence*

Come, O Holy Spirit, come! From Your bright and blissful Home, rays of healing light impart.

Come, Father of the poor, Source of gifts that will endure, Light of every human heart.

You of all consolers best, of the soul most kindly Guest, quickening courage do bestow.

In hard labor You are rest, in the heat You refresh best, and Your solace give in our woe.

O most blessed Light divine, Let Your radiance in us shine, And our inmost being fill.

Nothing good by man is thought, nothing right by him is wrought,  
when he spurns Your gracious Will.

Cleanse our souls from sinful stain, fill our dryness with Your rain,  
heal our wounds and mend our way.

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

On the faithful who in You, Trust with childlike piety, Deign Your sevenfold gift to send.

Give them virtue's rich increase, Saving grace to die in peace,  
give them joys that never end. Amen. Alleluia.