

[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.

I'm glad we 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 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.

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 blessing -- 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.

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. Here is how the Holy Spirit has changed this community of St. Martin de Porres over the past twelve months:

Our parish pictorial directory by Lifetouch has been completed. Almost 250 households had their photo taken. They are entitled to a free copy. Please stop by the office to pick up yours, if you had your photo taken.

The Parish Goal to reach out to the community is in motion. Our Evangelization Commission is looking to advertise in local free papers, to send e-mails to our parents and guardians in our Faith Formation program, to create those now-famous Robo-Calls to our registered and inactive parishioners to join us, and expanded our parish web site.

We are reaching out to the unchurched and the fallen-away Catholics with gifts at Christmas and Easter: Matthew Kelly's books: "Rediscover Christ" and "Beautiful Mercy."

We completed our beautiful welcome booklet for new parishioners. We hope to distribute a copy to each parish household so that you can review it over the summer, and prayerfully discern how you will be able to participate more fully in our parish life. All of our parish ministries and services need additional members. We are investigating sending a postcard invitation to every house within our parish boundaries, inviting them – and you -- to our Festival of Ministries in the fall.

The Education Commission sponsored the Martin Readers book review and offered adult formation series on Bible Study (Bible Timeline) and the Pope's letter on the environment. They also continue to find initiatives to bring young families to the Church. Christian Formation students brought the Nativity alive at our tree-trimming service in December. They also collected hundreds of pounds of plastic bottle caps and lids to help the environment.

In addition to its regular outreach, the Christian Service Commission sponsored its first mission trip to Kentucky with ten missionaries from St. Martin's. We are coordinating with St. Michael Parish in Sterling Heights to send a total of 18 missionaries this summer. We also learned how to say "Appalachia" the correct way!

A Colorful Art group was started. We participated in "Mercy in Action Day," which usually takes place in October by collecting medical supplies.

Sunday Offertory sacrificial giving online began, and we even have a link to this year's Catholic Services Appeal for those who would like to pledge electronically. Our Sunday collections are slowly squeaking close to budget, but as of today, we are still about \$10,000 below budget.

I've done many good things as pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish, but some have told me that my greatest legacy at St. Martin's is the renovation of our church rest rooms! I still receive compliments and gratitude for the completed project. We also improved our church sound system, repaired our church door closers and installed new exterior doors to the parish hall. The next step with the doors of both buildings is to install handicap openers.

In honor of our 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a parish and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of this church building, and in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the vision and appearance of Our Lady of Fatima, I am commissioning a portrait of Mary and her Immaculate Heart, one of the three requests given by Mary at Fatima in 1917: "Promote

devotion to my Immaculate Heart." It will hang next to the portrait of the Divine Mercy in the church sanctuary. It will be sponsored by a gift given last Christmas by the Active Christian Women's Club, who celebrate their own anniversary – 40 years this year.

Also, with the recent generous donation made by a family in our parish, I hope to paint the large image of St. Martin in the back of church to compliment the soft-painted tones of the image of the Holy Family, also in the back of the church. I celebrated 35 years of ordained ministry last month, and Sr. Noreen O'Connell, a Dominican Sister living in our area, celebrates 70 years as a consecrated religious woman.

Speaking of the Archdiocese, we are not only connected as members of St. Martin de Porres Church, we are connected to the 24 parishes of the Central Macomb Vicariate, to the Archdiocese of Detroit, and to the Universal Church.

Pope Francis and Archbishop Allen Vigneron, have been encouraging the Church to embrace the "new evangelization", renewing the message of the Gospel in our own lives and sharing it with others. In the last twelve months, the archdiocese, and our parish, have had a number of experiences that have energized this effort. Last April, 2016, Archbishop Vigneron brought "The Amazing Parish Conference" to Detroit, the first for any diocese in the U.S.A to have all parishes in one diocese participating.

Over a period of eight months, parishes across the archdiocese hosted a three-night experience, "Come, Encounter Christ" -- evenings of praise and worship music, powerful preaching, and an opportunity for the sacrament of reconciliation, closing with Benediction. All of this, and much more, including the Holy Door at the cathedral for the Year of Mercy, led to the Archdiocesan Synod in November, 2016. Everyone who participated -- bishops, priests, deacons, religious, representatives of the faithful -- all spoke of the three days as being Spirit-filled!

This weekend, Archbishop Allen Vigneron released the long-awaited pastoral letter to all Catholics in southeast Michigan.

Copies of the pastoral letter will be distributed this summer. As a parish, we will dissect and digest its contents and apply what it calls for to our parish.

All of this, and much more to come, is a result of the events sponsored by the Archdiocese -- no parish, or even a vicariate, would have the resources to put on these experiences which are having an effect in the lives of the faithful. It is the Catholic Services Appeal that gives the Archdiocese the financial resources needed to sponsor the variety of programs and services that no single parish could undertake.

The culmination of a years-long process of prayer, dialogue and discernment,

the Archbishop's pastoral letter will focus on how to change the way God's Word is shared in four distinct areas: personal life, family life, parish life (local Catholic church communities), and from the administrative staff that directly supports Archbishop Vigneron, known as Central Services – affectionately referred to as “Downtown.”

This process began in 2014 with the observance of a Year of Prayer for a New Pentecost and branding a new evangelization initiative called “Unleash the Gospel.” It is hoped that as a result of this pastoral letter, all local communities will discover effective, modern ways to proclaim and live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I read somewhere that there are four levels of happiness. The first comes from momentary pleasure. It's all about me, it's all about right now. Instant gratification.

The second level of happiness is the personal satisfaction I receive for a task well-done. I have used my God-given talents to the best of my ability.

The third level of happiness is making a difference by helping others. When I see a need and respond to it generously, I make the presence of God real for the other person. And they, in turn, do the same for me.

The highest form of happiness is union with God. This happens when we are fully human, fully alive, fully open to the Holy Spirit, and as Matthew Kelly puts it, “being the very best version of myself.” This is why Jesus Christ came; this is why He sends the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God will make us one with God. When we open ourselves to receive the Spirit of God, we will be strong enough to inspire and empower others. The Holy Spirit helps sinful people to receive the power of God to repent of their sins. The Advocate will help us to stand next to God, and to “Unleash the Gospel” in our parish, in our Archdiocese and in the world! *Veni Sancte Spiritus!* Come, Holy Spirit! Breathe on us, O Spirit of God! ALLELUIA and AMEN!