

Pentecost, Cycle B
Acts 2:1-11
1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13
John 15:26-27;16:12-15
June 4, 2006

Yesterday was a changing moment in my life, a rather significant change I might add. It was just about a year ago now when I first learned what the date of my diaconal ordination would be. One of the things I did when I learned the date was to look ahead to today on our liturgical calendar and saw that today would be Pentecost Sunday. I remember thinking how appropriate. Actually, my response was more like “Yes! An easy Sunday to preach after my ordination!”

Yesterday was a life-changing day for me in receiving the Sacrament of Holy Orders. As we celebrate Pentecost, we experience a life changing moment in the history of Christianity and in our own personal lives.

Starting on Ash Wednesday, we celebrated the season of Lent. Then, on Holy Thursday, the institution of the priesthood and the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Then, on Good Friday we celebrated the death of Jesus Christ. The apostles were left alone and in fear. How could this have happened to the Messiah? But they were not alone for long. The resurrected Jesus appeared to them and, according to Acts, spent forty days with them until his ascension to heaven. Then the apostles once again alone. On Pentecost, in dramatic fashion arriving with the wind as tongues of fire, they received the Holy Spirit and they were never apart from the Lord again.

As we celebrate the season of Easter to Pentecost, we are reminded of our own gift of receiving the Holy Spirit. For those of us baptized as infants, we don't even

remember when we first received the Holy Spirit in our baptism. We are more likely to remember our Confirmation when we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. Our baptism and confirmation may not seem as dramatic as that of the Apostles but it has the same life changing effect in the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So, as yesterday was a life changing moment for me, our celebration today of Pentecost reminds us all how we are transformed by the spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives us of each gifts. Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as the Advocate who brings us the fullness of truth. We can speak of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as *wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord*. The Holy Spirit gives each of us a portion of these gifts but also gives us of us different gifts not to use to build up our own self-worth or fortune but for us to use all our gifts together as a community. We do not live in isolation but together. Life is not a one-person show.

For example, look at how we celebrate Mass. It is not Fr. Paul or Fr. Austin doing a one person show. Many people are involved starting with those who clean and maintain the church. Then there is the liturgy committee who plan to make our celebrations more meaningful. There is a wonderful Arts & Environment committee who do a fabulous job decorating the church. All of this happens before mass even begins. Then, there are the greeters who make us feel welcome as we enter and the ushers who assist. During mass, there are the altar servers, lector, communion minister, cantor/choir, priests, and of course the deacon. All of these people contribute but so do all of your when you join in singing, responses, and attitude of prayer.

In the same way, we are all called to use our gifts together outside mass for the building up of our community. Last week, Fr. Paul preached about how we honor those who served on Memorial Day. Military, police, and firefighters use their gifts in service to protect us and keep us safe. Nurses and doctors have an understanding of how the human body works that the rest of us don't. A teacher gives us knowledge. A minister gives us wisdom. Some are gifted in hospitality to serve others at restaurants, etc. The important thing is that we work together.

Now, I would like to focus on one particular minister. It should be no surprise that I focus on the ministry of deacon.

Some people see the role of deacon only as someone who assists the priest. It is more than that. I am sure that even our cantor will agree that the minister of deacon is a very important ministry.

We are all familiar with seeing our deacons assist at mass, do the penitential rite, proclaim the gospel, sometimes preach, and then prepare the altar at the offertory. This is without a doubt an important part of the ministry of deacon. But it is more than that. Deacons minister outside of mass too. In fact, the first deacons in chapter 6 of the Book of Acts were not "ordained" to serve at mass but to take care of the needs of the widows and orphans. Later, in the early church, we have records that deacons helped teach the catechumens in what we know today as RCIA.

Our own parish deacons both work with the RCIA. They visit the sick and homebound. Some deacons work in prisons and hospitals. It is these experiences of ministry that a deacon brings with him as he serves at mass. As a deacon brings Christ to the world in visiting the sick and teaching the RCIA, the deacon proclaims the Gospel.

As the deacon helps with their needs, the deacon helps set the altar for the food of life. Lastly, they can baptize, welcoming people into our kingdom and preside at weddings where man and woman are joined together as Christ is joined to the Church.

So, as I began to serve as a deacon in ministry I ask for your continued support for me and my fellow deacons. The Schuyler Catholic Community has been absolutely essential in my studies. Our community has been so helpful to me I cannot be thankful enough. First, in getting me involved in church. When I first started coming here I sat in the back of the church and did not volunteer in anyway. Only when someone personally asked me to help did I step forth. Then people helped me recognize the gifts I have for ministry. When I first felt the call of God to priesthood I made excuses but it is you people and Fr. Dave too who helped me realize my gifts and my weaknesses. It is your prayers that have sustained me. Sometimes, nothing is more valuable than when I come home on break and people tell me they are praying for me and support me. I couldn't do it without your prayers and encouragement. Even in preparing for today, a couple of people came forth and took charge to coordinate the reception after mass so I didn't have to and to help plan the music etc. It felt so good when they volunteered. I didn't ask. The number of people who during the last month spoke to me on how they are excited for me has been what has kept me going as I got nervous and anxious.

And for the reception, it is you as members of this community who have provided the food and done the work for the reception. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you to the Catholic Daughters, our ushers, greeters, lector, communion minister, altar servers, musicians, priests, and the staff for all the work you have done.

And from the bottom of my heart I thank each of you in our community for all your support and remember priesthood is just a year away.