

Pentecost!

We have finally arrived at the great Solemnity of Pentecost; this is the day for the Church to celebrate and to bask in the coming of the Holy Spirit. I often think that the role of the Holy Spirit is easily overlooked in our liturgical theology, but remember that it is only in the Spirit that we can offer fitting praise and worship to the Father, through the Son. Also, it is the Spirit upon whom we call for transformation — to transform the gifts of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and to transform us who receive those gifts to be the presence of Jesus in the world. The Holy Spirit energizes us to become witnesses to Christ and to His Gospel before the whole world.

I love the fact that for us in this part of the world, Pentecost occurs as the warm weather is arriving; this year, with its late date of June 8, we can really make the connection between the warmth of the weather in nature and the warmth of the fire of the Holy Spirit. *Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kind in them the fire of your love!*

Return to Ordinary Time

After today's Solemnity we return to Ordinary Time in our liturgical year. By "Ordinary Time" we do not mean "ordinary" as in "commonplace," but rather "ordinary" in the sense of "ordinal" or "numbered." We no longer celebrate a liturgical season with a special emphasis or particular focus, as we do during Advent, Christmas Time, Lent or Easter Time, but instead, as we celebrate the Paschal Mystery week after week, Sunday after Sunday, the Sundays are designated by number as the liturgical season of "Ordinary Time."

Look for the changes in our liturgical environment: the Paschal Candle will be returned to its usual place near the baptismal font, rather than next to the ambo; the Easter Water vessel will no longer be prominently displayed in the sanctuary; and our decorations and floral arrangements return to a simpler display. In these ways, what we see throughout the entire church communicates to us the liturgical season we are celebrating.

Congratulations to New Altar Servers

It was my pleasure last Sunday at the 9:30 a.m. Mass to install nine (9) new altar servers, whose names are listed prominently elsewhere in this bulletin. Congratulations to these young people who are offering this wonderful service to the parish! I hope your offering as an altar server brings you closer to Jesus through a deeper participation in the celebration of the Eucharist.

I have to admit that it is a special joy and pleasure for me to moderate the altar servers and to train each new group. It's a great way of making a connection to these young people and their families. (In addition, it provides an outlet for the part of me that always wanted to be an elementary school teacher!)

All of our altar servers do a great job, and I take this opportunity to thank them for their time and service. We need to do a little bit of work in the year ahead on getting our number of servers up; I would like us to see between 63 and 84 altar servers in total, a goal which I am sure we can reach (we are now at about 31). Parents: why not plant the idea in your child's head about becoming an altar server? I would like to do another recruitment in the Fall, so keep your eyes out for it!

Mission Appeal Weekend

Next weekend OLPH will be participating in the Mission Appeal on behalf of the Diocese of Rockville Centre's Propagation of the Faith. Father Ugo Nacciarone, S.J., will be speaking at all the Masses on the weekend of June 14-15 to make the mission appeal on behalf of the diocese's Propagation of the Faith Office. I'm sure that all of you will show your usual generosity and kindness in this special appeal as we welcome Father Ugo.

Behavior in Church

This is a topic which, unfortunately, is necessary to address on a regular basis from time to time, and it involves our behavior in church. Perhaps we can all take a few moments to reflect on these thoughts and see if and how they apply to us.

Unfortunately, our society as a whole has become less formal and less reverent toward spiritual values. The "me-first" narcissism which seems to pervade every aspect of our culture,

where each individual person perceives himself or herself as their own reference point without regard for larger communal realities, is a tough thing to work against. Nonetheless, it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to be aware of our behavior when we are in church. Let's reflect on this from two aspects: decorum and attire.

"Decorum" has to do with behaving in a way that is in keeping with good taste and propriety; it involves good manners and proper etiquette. When used in relation to a church environment, decorum would involve avoidance of loud conversation before, during and after Mass. A church is not a catering hall, soccer field or mall, but a sacred place for sacred activities. While it is good for parishioners to make connections with each other as part of parish life, we also have to be mindful of one another. Loud conversations after Mass should be taken elsewhere so that those coming in for the next Mass can pray and recollect themselves. Certainly during Mass itself conversations and other distracting habits are inappropriate.

The problem, of course, is that no one ever thinks they are being distracting — it's always someone else! How can we begin to foster better decorum? I think it's as much your job to foster it with one another as it is my job or any of the priests'. First of all, take a good, long, hard look at your own behavior in church. Also, if someone is behaving irreverently or inappropriately, or causing a distraction, let them know. Do it politely; do it gently and lovingly; but, do it. This is especially true if it is a family member or a friend. I understand it can be hard to go up to a stranger, but if friends and family members don't tell each other, who will? Restoring a sense of decorum and reverence is something that has to begin with us "regulars," who sometimes are the biggest offenders.

Everything I said about decorum can also be said about attire. On a regular basis we run an announcement about dressing properly for Mass, and that says it all. Perhaps the place to start is for us "regulars" to take a good, long, hard look at how we dress for Mass. Again, I think it starts with us. The more people who are dressed properly, the more those who are dressed improperly will get the hint because they will not be the norm. Let's be honest: does it

really take that long to change clothes to put on a decent pair of pants and a decent top, blouse or shirt, instead of sloppy shorts and a tee-shirt? Also, I have to be completely honest: in my opinion, jeans are not proper attire for Mass; they are too casual, especially since nowadays the jeans considered to be in style are faded and ripped. If we're going to be honest with ourselves, isn't laziness really the reason for not dressing properly for Mass? Isn't Mass worth our best? Allow me to use once again the thought from my closing sentence above: restoring a sense of proper attire for Mass is something that has to begin with us "regulars," who sometimes are the biggest offenders.

Father's Day Novena of Masses

Don't forget about our Novena of Masses for Father's Day. This is a beautiful way to remember and pray for your father, living or deceased. Please look for the Father's Day cards and envelopes around the church. Your intention will be remembered in the Father's Day Novena of Masses.

In conclusion...

Together, let's aim high in Christ. Together, let's bring out the best in each other. Together, let's be the best we can be in Christ.

And let's always remember: LOVE IS A GIFT.

Sincerely,