

MASS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
FRIDAY, 30 AUGUST, 2019

...be kind to one another, compassionate, and mutually forgiving, just as God has given you in Christ.



So, today we celebrate the Mass of the Holy Spirit. For the freshmen, this may be brand new. For the sophomores, juniors, and seniors, it's probably pretty old hat by now. It's what we do every year at Prep, what every Jesuit school does, all over the world. Why, those purple people downtown even celebrate the Mass of the Holy Spirit!

But it's important to take a moment to remember what it is that we are really asking for.

I know what I want – I want help as I work with our alumni and our friends, with the board of trustees and the administration. I want everyone here to have a safe year, and a good year. I want our students to be happy, and their parents too. And for our faculty and staff...I want for them to have a great year.

And as I look around, I can see what other people want. I know Mr. Paro wants the athletes to be great men and to win some great games...in that order by the way. And I know Mr. Rothenberg wants everyone to try out and for his casts and crews to come together to put on some great show. I know Mrs. Gallagher wants her students to do all their reading and to come up with truly Christian understandings of their world. I know the Mr. Burton and the Kitchen Staff want everyone to be healthy and well fed. Mr. Harkins and the Residential Staff want everyone in bed on time. And I know...I know...Mrs. Weldon and Mrs. Hibbert want everyone, including me, to get that flu shot! Peter Connelly and Peter Roche want every student to be engaged in the life of this school. Dmitri Vassliou wants to win tennis and chess matches and to hit a solo perfectly at the Christmas concert. And James Stanton wants me to keep suggesting books to him; he wants to be smarter than I am. And Louis Messina...Louis just wants me mention his name in the homily – that one's for you, Louis. I could go on and on and on. All of us here want good things and that's great. But it's not the point.

Today we are asking not for what we want, but for what we need – what God knows we need. And that is nothing less than the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Jesus – the Spirit of Love that binds the Father and the Son –the Spirit of God! Nothing less!

And what is that Spirit? Most of us have heard of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. And those are great. But those are signs of the Spirit's presence, not the Spirit. The readings today tell us what the Spirit really is. We hear it in what Jesus says, but more importantly we see it in what he does.

So the scene in today's gospel is right after the Resurrection. Jesus has been betrayed and handed over. He's been put on trial and tortured. He's been publicly humiliated and rejected by everyone, including his so-called friends. And he's been nailed to a cross and made a public display of. And of course, he was innocent of everything they said about him. And then he is raised from the dead.

And he goes to see his so-called friends.

Now, I don't know about you, but if I went through that, I would have a few things to say to my "friends." And if I were the son of God, I might have some use for my heavenly powers at that moment. I'm sure I could think of a few things that my "friends" might deserve.

But what does Jesus say: Peace be with you. Peace be with you. And rather than smiting them, raining fire on them, sending them straight down the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire, he gives them his Spirit. And he tells them what that Spirit is about: whose sins you forgive are forgiven.

My dear brothers and sister, the Spirit of God is about forgiveness and compassion, nothing more, nothing less. And that is the gift God wants to give us, nothing more, nothing less. And he wants us to use all our gifts, all our talents, all our successes, even all our failures and limitations, for that end.

Now, don't get me wrong: it doesn't mean that we don't have to work hard in the classroom, on the field, on the stage, at home, on service trips. God wants us to develop all our talents, to learn, to grow, to develop into the best, the most complete people we can be. Because all of those talents and gifts, all those successes, even the failures and limitations,...all can be used in the service of reconciliation—reconciliation between people, reconciliation in families and neighborhoods, reconciliation in our government and church. All things are needed. We know that. We live in a very dark time...a time when so many people are condemning each other. And God asks us to be agents of reconciliation. For as St. Paul reminds us, as Jesus reminds us, God is the God of reconciliation, of

forgiveness, of love. We will never be perfect, but we can be forgiving, and God asks us, most of all, to be compassionate.

As you know, the theme for our year is to be Apostles on Mission—in our mission to form a community here and to extend our community to others in service, in our mission of study and of play, in our mission of being family to one another, in our mission of brotherhood and sisterhood, in our mission to grow, in our mission to love one another as we have been loved—to be apostles. To be signs of God's love, God's forgiveness, God's spirit in our world. So let us begin...



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