

Pentecost Sequence

*Come O Holy Spirit, come, and from your celestial home,
shed a ray of Light divine.*

*Come, O Father of the poor; come, O Giver of all gifts;
come within our hearts now shine.*

*You, of comforters the best, You, the soul's most
welcome Guest, sweet refreshment here below.
In our labor, rest most sweet; grateful coolness in the heat;
solace in the midst of woe.*

*O most blessed Light divine, may that Light within us shine
and our inmost being fill.
In your absence, we have naught, nothing good in deed or
thought, nothing free from taint of ill.*

*Heal our wounds, our strength renew; on our dryness pour
your dew; wash the stains of guilt away.
Bend the stubborn heart and will; melt the frozen,
warm the chill, guide the steps that go astray.*

*On the faithful who adore and confess you evermore,
in your seven-fold gifts descend.
Give them virtue's sure reward, give them your salvation,
Lord, give them joys that never end. Amen. Alleluia.*

*Prepared by Mary Giegengack-Jureller, PhD
for the Adult Faith Enrichment Team,
All Saints Parish, Syracuse, NY*



Novena to the Holy Spirit

In every liturgical year, the Church gives us the 40 days of Lent to prepare for the great feast of Easter, reminiscent of the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the desert after the Exodus, and the 40 days that Jesus fasted in the desert after his baptism. Those wilderness experiences prepared the Jews for their passage into the promised land and prepared Jesus for his public ministry. Our current Lenten practices encourage us to renew our own covenantal commitment to Christ, as we seek to celebrate ever more deeply the great mystery of his Passion / Resurrection.

Since our celebration of Easter, we have now spent 40 days reflecting on the presence of the Risen Christ among us. The liturgical feast of the Ascension falls just 10 days before the next great feast of Pentecost. The Jewish holy day of Pentecost, marking 50 days after Passover, is a celebration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. For Christians, it has become a celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit, promised to the disciples by Jesus before his Passion / Resurrection.

The timing of Ascension and Pentecost in the church's liturgical calendar provides us with what we might think of as the church's first NOVENA – a nine-day period of prayer to seek special graces. In communion with Jesus' first followers, we too can spend nine days praying for the coming of the Spirit.

As we meditate for a few minutes each day, we may recall the promise of the Holy Spirit, rejoice in the gifts of the Spirit, and seek to bear greater testimony to the fruits of the Spirit in our life as Christians. May our nine days of prayer bring about a renewal of our individual hearts, a renewal of our Christian community and a renewal of the whole Church, we pray, in Jesus' name.

9. Saturday, Vigil of Pentecost

The Pauline letter to the Ephesians emphasizes again what it means to be called to be followers of Christ and vessels of the indwelling gift of the Spirit.

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to the one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all and through all and in all" [Ephesians 4:1-6].

Ted Loder, in his book My Heart In My Mouth, writes "that even in adversity, pain and suffering, even in the face of defeat and death, as in all else, the Spirit labors for our healing, resilience, and deliverance; leaving on us the eternal fingerprints of grace and glory!" And Fr. Anthony Oelrich, Pastor of Christ Church Newman Center in St. Cloud, MN, says: "By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, our faces -- the faces of us who are called disciples of Jesus -- have become the face of God turned toward the world in mercy and healing love."

O Spirit of God, Spirit of Love and Compassion, You are the stirring in our hearts. Encourage us not to give up, but fill us anew with all the graces and gifts that God has promised us. Make us your witnesses unto the ends of the earth.

Pray the Pentecost Sequence, printed on the back cover.

*All quotations from the Bible are taken from the
New Revised Standard Version*

8. Friday, Seventh Week of Easter:

Paul's letter to the Romans, written from Corinth about 57 CE shortly before the end of his apostolic missions, contains the fullest exposition of the Gospel, as Paul understood it. Given its length and theological depth, it is considered by many to be the most influential document in Christian theology. The power of the Holy Spirit is celebrated again and again, reaching a beautiful climax in Ch. 8, which we can read and reread with great benefit.

"If the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the One who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through the same Spirit that dwells in you.

. . . For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God [vs. 11, 15-16].

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" [vs. 22-23, 26].

What **REVERENCE** we should feel for the presence of God in ourselves and in every human being! O Holy Spirit, the very One who energized and inspired Jesus in all his human thoughts, words and actions, You are now with us. You have poured into our hearts the love of God, the love that IS God. May the fruits of love, joy and peace radiate out from us to all the world.

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1. Friday, after the Ascension:

When Jesus was crucified, the disciples were tested to the core of their being. They had been tempted to give up their hope that the promised Messiah was present in the person of Jesus. (Recall the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, who told the stranger [Jesus] – "We HAD hoped . . . ")

Then in the days following his resurrection Jesus had consoled them in various ways and encouraged them all, as he did the two on the Emmaus walk. But they were still in need of further consolation and reassurance. Jesus had promised them the gift of the Spirit: "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live." [John 14: 18-19]

We too, face difficult times and look to the Spirit of God for comfort, and for rest in our trials – as individuals, as a parish community, as a nation and a world. We pray for the **WISDOM** to take time for quiet reflection so that God may console us and give us the rest we need in a hectic and demanding world.

Live fully in us, O Holy Comforter. Give us the **WISDOM** to be open-minded and to foster a broad perspective on our common problems. Plant your compassion and mercy deep within our hearts as we pray for your renewing presence in our lives.

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2. Saturday, after the Ascension:

After Jesus' Ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem and waited together in the Upper Room, as they had been instructed [Acts 1:12]. They had been devastated by Jesus' death, astounded by his Resurrection, and consoled by his appearances to them over a period of weeks. Yet, they did not have any clear idea of what the future would hold. They needed divine guidance to see the path ahead.

They waited for the infusion of the Spirit, promised by Jesus: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. . . . Keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, who will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees nor knows the Spirit. You know the Spirit, who abides with you and will be in you." [John 14: 1-2, 15-17]

We too need divine guidance, when we face confusion, disappointment or a reversal of our plans. We do not see in advance where the Spirit of God may be leading us, but we need to trust, as the disciples did, that the promised Advocate will show us the way.

Abide with us, O Spirit of Truth. Renew in us your gift of **KNOWLEDGE** that we may see clearly; help us to understand the world as it is, and not only as we would like it to be. Show us how to be faithful disciples in our daily lives, as individuals and as a community.

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7. Thursday, Seventh Week of Easter:

In his letters, St. Paul repeatedly emphasizes the energizing role of the Holy Spirit, reflecting the long biblical tradition of the power of God's Spirit. Recall that in the beginning, the Breath of God swept over the primeval waters, bringing 'cosmos' [order] out of the original chaos [Genesis 1:2]. The second creation story [Gen Ch. 2] depicts God forming human-kind out of the dust of the earth, breathing into human nostrils the breath of life. Thus, a new creature emerges, made in the image of Godself. Then to bring an end to the great flood [Gen 8:1], God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; the dove sent out by Noah brought back the good news that life would resume. And, as Jesus came up out of the waters at his baptism, the heavens were torn open and the Spirit, like a dove descended upon him, heralding a new creation.

In our own baptism, the same Spirit is given to us. "When the fullness of time had come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!' So you are no longer slaves, but children, and if children, then also heirs" with Christ to all the riches of God [Galatians 4:4-7].

O Breath of God, fill us with **WONDER** and **AWE** at the inestimable gifts You have poured out on us. May the fruits of goodness, patience, gentleness, generosity and self-control blossom from the seeds you have planted deeply in our hearts. May all who interact with us feel the warmth and healing that your presence brings into our lives.

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3. Seventh Sunday of Easter:

Before Jesus left the upper room after the Last Supper, he prayed for all his disciples and tried to prepare them for what was to come: "Now I am going to the One who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you, but if I go I will send the Spirit to you." [John 16:5-7].

How many times have we grieved when someone has been taken from us by death or has left us to move away? Have we feared that life would never be the same without the presence of someone we have loved or depended on? And life is not the same, but life does go on, and we need to learn how to adapt to the changes that life always brings.

Jesus' promise of the gift of the Spirit – the very same Spirit that animated him all his life – is something we can cling to. God is the Giver of all good gifts. The Holy Spirit gives us **UNDERSTANDING**, or heart-knowledge, enabling us to see things from the perspective of another's heart, even from the perspective of the heart of Jesus.

Come, O Spirit of God, to renew and restore us. As we try to adjust to the newness of every day, fill our hearts with your light and grace. Help us to proclaim your good news in ways and with words that others will **UNDERSTAND**, so that together we may truly be the Body of Christ today.

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4. Tuesday, Seventh week of Easter:

When Saul of Tarsus was converted on the road to Damascus [Acts 9:1-17], he was blinded by the light from heaven that flashed around him and threw him to the ground. God sent Ananias to him, who laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Saul’s sight was restored, and he was baptized in the name of Jesus, whom had had been persecuting. Overcoming multiple dangers, difficulties and even imprisonments, Paul walked in the light of that Spirit for several decades, as he brought the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Gentile world of the first century.

God calls us also to be heralds of the Good News, and gives us the same Holy Spirit. At our baptism, like Paul, we also received the Spirit’s gift of **COURAGE**, enabling us to face adversities of every sort. Paul was on fire with the love of God, and would stop at nothing to nurture the communities under his care. God continues to renew the church through the gifts of the Spirit. We can be the instruments God uses today, if we open our minds and our hearts to receive the energizing, transforming radiance of the Holy Spirit.

Come Fount of Life, come Fire of Love, come Sweet anointing from above. Lift us up and give us eyes to see You, hearts to embrace You, and **COURAGE** to serve You faithfully, in Jesus name, we pray.

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5. Wednesday, Seventh Week of Easter:

St. Paul, having been filled with the Holy Spirit at his own baptism [Acts 9:17-19], often referred to the Spirit in his letters to the early communities of Christ’s followers. He wanted them to live in freedom, filled with joy. The blessings in his letters often wished them “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” [2 Corinthians 13: 13].

The Pauline communities included Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, free persons and slaves, and they were challenged to forge a **UNITY** that would lift them above all these divisions. We can only imagine how difficult that might have been in the culture of the Roman Empire of the first century. Their unity as the Body of Christ, a rich image developed in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, depended on their all being animated by the same Spirit of Jesus.

We Christians today face similar challenges. Our communities often contain diverse groups of people, with different traditions, and even speaking a variety of languages. It is our shared belief in Jesus, the Risen Christ, that draws us together and empowers us for the work of Christian discipleship. Paul declares that “No one can say “Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” [1Corinthians 12:3]. We need to call upon the Spirit of Jesus to strengthen us in our witness to the Gospel.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love. Then we shall be recreated, so that together with You, we may renew the face of the earth.

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