

PENTECOST SUNDAY

The Holy Spirit in Our Lives In describing the mission that the Holy Spirit would have in the Church, Christ used the significant words: “He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” And He added: “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth ... He will declare to you the things that are to come.” The Spirit is thus promised to the Church and to each Christian as a Teacher Who, in the secret of one’s conscience and one’s heart, makes one understand what one has heard, but was not capable of grasping: “Even now the Holy Spirit teaches the faithful,” said Saint Augustine in this regard, “in accordance with each one’s spiritual capacity. And he sets their hearts aflame with greater desire according as they progress in the charity that makes them love what they already know and desire what they have yet to know.” Furthermore, the Spirit’s mission is also to transform the disciples into witnesses to Christ: “He will bear witness to Me; and you also are witnesses.” But this is not all. For Saint Paul, who on this matter synthesizes a theology that is implicit in all of the New Testament, it is the whole of one’s “being a Christian,” the whole of the Christian life, the new life of the children of God, that constitutes a life in accordance with the Spirit. Only the Spirit enables us to say to God: “Abba, Father.” Without the Spirit we cannot say: “Jesus is Lord.” From the Spirit come all the charisms that build up the Church, the community of Christians. In keeping with this, Saint Paul gives each disciple of Christ the instruction: “Be filled with the Spirit.” Saint Augustine is very explicit: “Both (our believing and our doing good) are ours because of the choice of our will, and yet both are gifts from the Spirit of faith and charity.” Growth in faith and the maturing of Christian life towards its fullness is, consequently, a work of the Holy Spirit, a work that He alone can initiate and sustain in the Church

Consequently, it is clear that the Church—and also every individual Christian devoting himself to that mission within the Church and in her name—must be very much aware of acting as a living pliant instrument of the Holy Spirit. To invoke this Spirit constantly, to be in communion with Him, to endeavor to know His authentic inspirations must be the attitude of the teaching Church and of every Christian. (*John Paul II, Catechesis in Our Time, no. 72 [slightly adapted]*)

PENTECOST About the Kneeling Prayers:

Kneeling Prayers: Father Alexander Schmemmann writes: We are invited to kneel. This is our first kneeling since Easter. It signifies that after these 50 days of Paschal joy and fullness, of experiencing the Kingdom of God, the Church now is about to begin her pilgrimage through time and history. It is evening again, and the night approaches, during which temptations and failures await us, when, more than anything else, we need Divine help, that presence and power of the Holy Spirit, Who has already revealed to us the joyful End, Who now will help us in our effort towards fulfillment and salvation. All this is revealed in the three prayers which the celebrant reads now as we all kneel and listen to him.

In the first prayer, we bring to God our repentance, our increased appeal for forgiveness of sins, the first condition for entering into the Kingdom of God.

In the second prayer, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us, to teach us to pray and to follow the true path in the dark and difficult night of our earthly existence.

Finally, in the third prayer, we remember all those who have achieved their earthly journey, but who are united with us in the eternal God of Love.

The joy of Easter has been completed and we again have to wait for the dawn of the Eternal Day. Yet, knowing our weakness, humbling ourselves by kneeling, we also know the joy and the power of the Holy Spirit Who has come. We know that God is with us, that in Him is our victory. Thus is completed the feast of Pentecost and we enter “the ordinary time” of the year. Yet, every Sunday now will be called “after Pentecost” — and this means that it is from the power and light of these 50 days that we shall receive our own power, the Divine help in our daily struggle. At Pentecost, we decorate our churches with flowers and green branches — for

the Church “never grows old, but is always young.” It is an evergreen, ever-living Tree of grace and life, of joy and comfort. For the Holy Spirit – “the Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life – comes and abides in us, and cleanses us from all impurity,” and fills our life with meaning, love, faith and hope.

The Prayers In These Kneeling Prayers: There’s actually seven different prayers, done in three sets of kneeling: two in the first set, two in the second set, and three in the third set.

In the first prayer, we bring to God our repentance, our increased appeal for forgiveness of sins, the first condition for entering into the Kingdom of God.

In the second prayer, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us, to teach us to pray and to follow the true path in the dark and difficult night of our earthly existence.

In the third prayer, we remember all those who have achieved their earthly journey, but who are united with us in the eternal God of love.

By St. Augustine — Sermon 267, (*PL38, 1231*) There is Life in the Church because in the Church is the Spirit. My brothers and sisters, if you want the Holy Spirit to dwell in you, listen carefully. Our spirit, by means of which each individual life, is called the soul. And look what the soul does in the body. It gives life to all the limbs. It sees with the eyes, hears with the ears, smells with the nose, speaks with the tongue, works with the hands, walks with the feet. It is present at one and the same time in all the limbs to make them live. It gives life to all the limbs and to each limb its function. It is not the eye that hears, not the ear that sees, not the eye or the ear that speaks. Yet they are nonetheless alive. The ear is alive, the tongue is alive. Their functions are different, the life is the same. The Church of God is like that. By means of some believers she performs miracles, by means of others she teaches the truth; by means of some she keeps virginity, by means of others she respects marital fidelity. The tasks are different, the life is the same. What the soul is to the body of a human being, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, the Church. The Holy Spirit does for the whole Church what the soul does for the body of the individual. Look then and see what you ought to fear and what you ought to avoid. If the body suffers an amputation (for example of a finger or a hand or a foot) does the soul go with the limb that has been cut off? While it was in the body, that limb was alive; when it is cut off it loses its life. It is like that with Christians. They are alive only while they are in the Body. If they are cut off from the Body, the Holy Spirit is no longer with them.