

Homily for Trinity Sunday

Last Sunday was Pentecost Sunday. We celebrated that moment – 50 days after Easter Sunday – when the Holy Spirit first came down upon the Apostles, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and those gathered with them, filling them with His very gifts. But, as I said, the power of the Holy Spirit was not just meant to be a one-time thing, but rather something that all future generations of disciples, like us, would receive too. Therefore, last week during the homily I prayed over you, asking that the Holy Spirit might be stirred up in your lives in a powerful, yet gentle, way. This is called being baptized in the Holy Spirit, which means, that we allow ourselves to be immersed into the very life and power of God's Spirit.

I know this was something different for many of you. And I totally expected that there would be lots of experiences spanning the spectrum. I'm thankful to those of you who shared with me your experience of what this was like – and if you'd still like to I'd invite you to do so. Many of you probably just thought it was a nice meditation and are neutral about it all – that's good. Others of you may not have had a positive experience with it – maybe even to the point of being a little uneasy in one way or another – that's OK too – we're all at different places in our lives. And others of you may have had a deeper spiritual experience – which is wonderful.

Since such deeply spiritual experiences are not common for many people, I'd like to share about two experiences people had with this "baptism in the Holy Spirit". One is a fellow parishioner's from last weekend, and one is mine from about 15 years ago.

First, a parishioner shared with me that during the homily they saw a bright yellow light – not a disk like the sun, but more like an orb of warm light that was moving around the church. At various points, this light came close to them, and eventually embraced them in such a way that they felt so loved by God and such a beautiful peace. This person was not asleep, but was no longer hearing the words I spoke, but was enveloped in this mystery. I shared with that person that I truly believed that this was a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. How did I know that? 1) I was praying for the Holy Spirit to be stirred up in your lives. 2) St. Paul tells us in Galatians that the fruit of the Spirit is: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control". What did this person experience? Deep love and peace. Sounds like the Holy Spirit to me!

Now my own experience. When I was a college student at Millersville, I went to a so-called charismatic Mass at St. Teresa's in New Cumberland, which ended with a period of prayers for healing in the Holy Spirit. This involved people going up to the front of the church as you would to receive Holy Communion, in order to be prayed over by a priest or other trained person.

I noticed that as people were going up, they were falling over and trained people behind them were catching them. I had no idea what was going on. I told myself: “There is no way I’m going to let that happen to me – no way!” However, when I received this prayer, all the sudden I found myself lying on the floor. It was like I was wrapped in a blanket of such brilliant light and peace, feeling God’s love fill me. I was on the floor for several minutes. The best way I can describe it is if I wanted to have moved, I couldn’t have, but I didn’t want to – it was that beautiful of an experience. Again, the fruits of the Holy Spirit showed up here too!

Now, I know some of you are looking at me like I have 19 heads right now, and that’s OK – I wouldn’t have believed those people in front of me were having authentic experiences either. I just thought they were faking it for attention or something like that.

The point of baptism in the Holy Spirit, though, is to just yield ourselves to God. It means, we don’t have to figure it all out or we have to understand what it all means. It means that we surrender ourselves to Jesus – that we lay down our pride – and that we become like little children – for such as these will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

It also means that we allow ourselves to be immersed in the very life of God, who is utter divine mystery. After all, isn't that what today's celebration of the Holy Trinity is all about? Who of us can understand how three divine persons are united as one God? Or, who of us can comprehend really who God is, how long eternity is for, or how much God loves us? My friends, these aren't mysteries to be solved. They are mysteries for us to be fully immersed into and personally experience.

At the end of the day, what we know most fundamentally about God is that He is love; for as the Gospel teaches us today: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." But who of us understands love, let alone God's love? To be mature disciples of Jesus means that we yield ourselves to the mystery of God's love – that we allow ourselves to be caught up in His perfect love for each one of us – and that we share that love with all those around us.

So, don't worry if you didn't have an experience like the two I mentioned – each one of us is different. Besides, we know that the Holy Spirit desires for us to not just have a *one-time* encounter with Him, but rather He desires to transform our lives by the outpouring of His gifts. And so, I can promise you, the more you open yourself up to God without qualms, complaints, or stubbornness, the more you will experience His power and presence in your life. God bless you.