

This weekend is Pentecost, when we celebrate the birthday of the Church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As I write this I am reminded of the color red that we wore for the 8th grade graduation Mass last night, a votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, when not too long ago those same 8th graders received the sacrament of Confirmation and were fully initiated into the Catholic Church.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us of the effects of Confirmation, which is the *same* outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the disciples received at Pentecost:

Confirmation brings an increase and deepening of baptismal grace:

- it roots us more deeply in the divine filiation which makes us cry, "Abba! Father!"
- it unites us more firmly to Christ;
- it increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit in us;
- it renders our bond with the Church more perfect;

All these effects increase, deepen or strengthen a relationship with the Lord already received at baptism. But I was most moved by the final effect of Confirmation which most mirrors the bold witness of the Apostles:

- it gives us a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ, to confess the name of Christ boldly, and never to be ashamed of the Cross (CCC 1303).

Compared to the Apostles who witnessed to Jesus to the point of shedding their blood, probably like you, I feel a bit inadequate. Do we even know the faith well enough to defend it with clarity and charity? In last year's survey of parishioners, many felt uncomfortable with witnessing to others about Christ because of a lack of confidence in knowing the faith. There are so many podcasts, Relevant Radio, Word on Fire, Ascension Press, and other good sources for us to learn from.

The name of Jesus Christ is the name by which every knee will bend in heaven on earth and under the earth. Yet, we perhaps struggle with saying the Lord's name, at least not as boldly as the Apostles. Why is that? Maybe we are afraid of offending others or of bringing up the topic of religion in certain family, friend, or work contexts. The disciples started off afraid too in giving witness, they were hiding out of fear, but the gift of the Holy Spirit gave them courage and He will do the same for us. People are ultimately lost and miserable without the Lord. Let us be confident that the good news is actually good and needed by others...do not be afraid!

Never be ashamed of the cross. Are we ashamed of Jesus Christ? It is often comical for adults to watch adolescents act like they're not related to their own, good parents. They will walk farther away from them or pretend they don't know when their parents call to them. The parents are usually calm, confident, loving people but the angsty teen doesn't think they're cool and doesn't want to claim them as their parents while in front of others. We can be like that with the Lord. We love Him privately, in our heads, maybe at Sunday Mass but become awkward and embarrassed when claiming to be His in public.

Parents patiently love and stay with their children during their adolescent years, presuming they will grow out of such immaturity. Jesus Christ is not ashamed of Himself; He is the Lord. The Holy Spirit will help us to grow from being timid, awkward, and embarrassed Catholics into wise adult children of our Heavenly Father who are proud and grateful for all the Lord has done for us.

Come Holy Spirit, Come,

Fr. Mike

