

Fr. Gerard's column 5/28/23

Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. As Scripture says: Rivers of living water will flow from within him who believes in me.

How often have you caught yourself saying something to children that your parents said to you? As children we depend upon the guidance of our parents, we need them to guide us and correct us. As we grow older, those lessons imposed upon us, become a part of us. We know how to protect ourselves, make decisions and hopefully stay out of trouble. The messages we have received become a part of us, they are absorbed into our souls and direct us to the point that we share that same wisdom with others.

As we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost, we acknowledge a similar reality. With the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we, therefore, have Jesus' values and attitudes operating within us. We see things as he sees them. We begin to recognize him in the people we meet. We begin to understand that it is Jesus speaking to us when we read the Bible. Just as we absorb our parents' attitudes and values by the discipline they imposed on us, so Jesus' word begins to penetrate our hearts and minds through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we begin to change from within.

Through the sacramental life, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within us and like the rivers of living water the presence of Christ begins to overflow in us. We live in a culture that tells us that religion is something private, something we should keep to ourselves. However, Christians who have really experienced the power and love of the Holy Spirit can't keep the message to themselves. Where would we be if the apostles had decided that Jesus' resurrection would be their little secret? Where would we be if those who witnessed Jesus' miracles and heard his words didn't pass the stories along to the next generation of believers? And what will become of our children and grandchildren if we fail to share with them the power of God's love made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ?

Today's feast, Pentecost, is the celebration of the birthday of the church. We are the church because of the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit, through faith, now lives in the hearts of over two billion women and men who call themselves Christians. There are women in Africa, men in Asia, children in Europe, old ladies in South America, and teenagers in Australia who believe and worship just as we do. This didn't all take place over the past two thousand years because the apostles had a good business plan and marketing strategy. It happened because the Holy Spirit worked in a powerful way, giving authority to the words of those who preach, and making those who hear ready to give their hearts over in faith. That same Holy Spirit is among us now strengthening me as I preach and touching your hearts as you listen.

The task now falls to us who have been given to drink of this life-giving water in the Spirit of Jesus. Will we keep it to ourselves? Or will we speak about it to everyone we meet so that all creation, which is groaning and in agony, can be transformed by the values and the attitudes of Jesus, our Savior?

LIVING FAITH IN SUMMER MONTHS - Pentecost brings one liturgical season to a close, and Memorial Day begins the summer season. The transition from spring to summer is a time that is also filled with many activities like sports, graduations, weddings etc. Sometimes we use that busyness as an excuse for missing mass. We then find ourselves slipping into summer, with our pattern of Sunday mass attendance disrupted and therefore the summer months become a vacation from faith, rather than a vacation of faith. While the summer can be a time for physical rest, it is ***not a time of vacation from the Lord.***

In 1997, before departing for summer vacation, Pope Saint John Paul II in a weekly address said, "... *take healthy vacations, ones that provide a healthy escape, avoiding harmful abuses of your health and that of others.*" In the next few weeks, we hope to share some ways in which you can remain connected and perhaps enrich your faith during the summer months. Most importantly, I urge you to commit to weekly mass throughout the weeks ahead.

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION – During our 12:00 p.m. mass today many of our parishioners will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Some are high school students and others have participated in our Adult Faith Formation program. All of them complete their initiation into the church and now are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live their faith while drawing others into a relationship with Jesus and the Church.

GRADUATIONS – Throughout the final weeks of May, many college students have completed their studies and received diplomas. As new graduates they face a new time in life, what some refer to as "adulting." We offer congratulations to all our college graduates and offer our prayers and support as they begin fulfilling careers and enriching vocations.

MEMORIAL DAY – So many of our Long Island communities were founded by veterans and their families. This week we remember those who never came home, paying the ultimate sacrifice for our country. Amid this long weekend, don't forget to pray for the lives lost and those who mourn them.

Peace,

