

**THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, Year C**  
Acts 15:1-2,22-29; Ps 67:2-3,5,6,8; Rv 21:10-14,22-23; Jn 14:23-29

***THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT***

Homily by Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun  
Saturday, May 25, 2019, 5:00 p.m. Mass  
Sunday, May 26, 2019, 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Masses

Let's **set the scene** for the gospel that we just heard.  
You don't have to close your eyes,  
but use your **imagination** to **paint a mental picture**.

It was **Holy Thursday** night.  
It was the Jewish feast of **Passover**.  
The occasion was the **Last Supper**.  
The place was the **Upper Room**.  
It was a **large room** furnished with a **U-shaped table**.  
**Jesus** was seated in the **middle**  
**flanked** by his **disciples** to the **right** and the **left**.  
There were place settings only on **one side** of the **table**.  
The **dinner** was **over**.  
The **Scripture readings** were done.  
They had said all of their **prayers**.  
They had sung all of the **hymns**.  
**Judas Iscariot** had already slipped away (Jn 13:30a).  
It was quite **late**, maybe 10:00 or 10:30 (Jn 13:30b).  
The room was lit with candlelight,  
so it was **dim** inside.  
There was a **nervous tension** in the air.  
Jesus knew that his **hour had come** (Jn 13:1),  
and the disciples could feel it.  
His **time** was **short**.  
Jesus had to **make every word count**.  
It was time for his **final message**,  
his **fireside chat** with his **closest partners**.

I'm guessing that **Jesus** had a very **kindly, gentle** tone of **voice**.

**Last week** we heard Jesus' **opening remark**,  
how he would **summarize** all of his teaching in **one little phrase**:  
"Fellas, **love one another**" (paraphrase, Jn 13:34).  
Jesus wanted to **re-emphasize** for one final time his **core message**:  
"Please, please, **love each other** the way that I have loved you" (paraphrase, Jn 13:34).  
"Do you know what would really make me happy?  
If you **love each other**."

Next, **Jesus** could **see** into the **future**, but his disciples could not.

**Jesus** knew that he had come **from heaven** (see Jn 3:13)

and that he was **going back to heaven**.

**Jesus** had been **with his Father** (Jn 1:1,18), **left** his Father (Jn 1:14),

and was **returning** to his Father (see Jn 13:1,3).

Jesus even forewarned his disciples about his upcoming departure:

“I will **be with you** only a **little while** longer” (Jn 13:33a).

After three years together, to the disciples this was **terribly disturbing**.

Jesus looked around the dinner table

and he could see that the **Eleven** were **on edge** and **upset**.

So **Jesus**, with a very **reassuring** voice, said to them,

“My friends, I know that you are worried and sad.

**Do not** let your hearts **be troubled**.

There are **great things in store** for you.

I’m going back to heaven, the Father’s house (see Jn 14:2).

**In heaven** there is a **place reserved** for every single one of you.

So you **don’t** need to **worry**.

On your last day I will **come back** and **get you**,

and I am going to be your personal **escort**, your personal **guide**,

and I will **lead you home** and **give you your place in heaven**” (paraphrase, Jn 14:1-3).

So **Jesus** has **said two things so far** in his after-dinner chat:

**first**, he **reviewed** his **new commandment**, love one another,

and **second**, he **reassured** his disciples that **one day** they would **go to heaven**.

All of this sets the stage for **today’s gospel**.

**Jesus** was still at the **head of the table**

and he had a **few more things to say**.

Jesus knew that after he had ascended to heaven

that his **disciples**, who he would send out as **missionaries** (Jn 20:21b),

would be confronted with **super-difficult hardships**.

They would **leave home**,

**travel** long distances by foot,

**hot** by day, **cold** by night,

**sweaty** one moment, **shivering** the next,

**hungry** and **thirsty**, **tired** and **dirty**.

Yes, they would make new believers,

but they would face **bitter opposition** from those who did not convert,

and **all** of them except John would be **put to death**.

There is no way that Jesus would have them attempt this without his **help**.

Jesus had to **equip them** for all of the **challenges coming** down the road.

So Jesus said, “I am not going to leave orphans” (Jn 14:18a);

“There is **no way** that I would ever **abandon you**.

You **do not have to go it alone**.

I will be **with you always**. I will be **constant companion**.”

Then Jesus explained how he would be **present** to his disciples in a **new way**:

“I am going to **send you** the **Holy Spirit**, the Paraclete, the Advocate, to be with you always” (see Jn 15:26; 16:7).

And **Jesus delivered** on his promise.

**As Jesus died**, his **farewell gift** was the **Holy Spirit** (see Jn 19:30b).

**After Jesus rose** from the dead,

on the **evening** of the **first day** of the **week** (Jn 20:19),

Jesus would **reappear** in the very **same Upper Room**,

and he would **breathe** upon each of them (Jn 20:22a),

and he would **say** to them, “**Receive the holy Spirit**” (Jn 20:22b).

Let us **reflect**, for a moment, on **traits** of the **Holy Spirit**,  
and **how** the **Holy Spirit** would **help** the **disciples**.

Let us move into **meditation mode**.

Let us be **attentive**, **concentrate**, and **ponder** the **Holy Spirit**.

When the disciples did **not know where to go**,  
the Holy Spirit would be their **guide**.

When they did **not know what to say**,  
the Holy Spirit would **provide the words**.

When they **needed wisdom** and **insight**,  
the Holy Spirit would give them **inspiration**.

When they had to make a decision,  
the Holy Spirit would **lead** them to the **truth**.

When they were **afraid**,  
the Holy Spirit would give them **courage**.

When they were **worried**,  
the Holy Spirit would bring them **peace**.

When they were **tired**,  
the Holy Spirit would **renew** their **strength**.

When they were **weak**,  
the Holy Spirit would give them **power**.

When they had **sinned**,  
the Holy Spirit would grant them **forgiveness**.

When they were **wounded**,  
the Holy Spirit would bring them **healing**.

When they were **mourning**,  
the Holy Spirit would bring them **consolation**.

When they were **exasperated**,  
the Holy Spirit would bring them **self-control**.

When they were **sad**,  
the Holy Spirit would bring them **joy**.

And when they **doubtful**,  
the Holy Spirit would bring them **reassurance**  
and help them to be **faithful to the end**.

During this **incredible moment** around the **dinner table**,  
Jesus led off with **three simple messages**:

“**Love each other**,”

“You have a **place reserved** for you **in heaven**,”

and, “You will **receive the Holy Spirit**.”

And of course, the **message** that **Jesus** gave to his disciples is also **intended for us**.  
The **disciples** were **gathered around a table**,  
and **so are we – this altar**.

Jesus wants to **review three important things** with us:

“I have but **one commandment: Love one another**”;

“Don’t ever forget, there is a **place reserved** for each of you **in heaven**”;

and, “I **give** each of you the gift of the **Holy Spirit**.”

Jesus is **not** here to **breathe** on us (see Jn 20:22),

and **tongues of flame** are **not** going to **appear** over our heads (see Acts 2:3).

But as **Catholics**, we **believe** that **Jesus gives** us the gift of his **Holy Spirit**  
in the **seven sacraments**.

When Jesus was **baptized**, the Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove,  
and when we are **baptized**, the heavens are opened and the **Holy Spirit descends upon us**.

When a person goes to **Confession**, at the time of **absolution**,  
it is the **Holy Spirit** that grants **pardon** and **peace**.

When a person receives Jesus in **Holy Communion**,  
it is the **Holy Spirit** that **extends** the **presence of Jesus within us**.

When a person receives the Sacrament of **Confirmation**,  
the Holy Spirit gives the confirmand additional **strength** to **witness** their **faith to others**.

When a person receives the Sacrament of **Anointing**,  
the priest lays hands on the head of the sick person,  
the Holy Spirit gives the person **healing** and **peace**.

When a **priest** is **ordained**,  
the Holy Spirit is conferred when the bishop lays hands,  
and the Holy Spirit **guides** the **priest’s ministry**.

When a **couple** is **joined** together in the Sacrament of **Marriage**,  
**God**, who is **love** (1 Jn 4:8,16), is the **bond** between them,  
and the **Holy Spirit unifies** them and **keeps them faithful**.

In **addition** to the **sacraments**, whenever we **pray**,  
Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to **be with us** and **help us**.

The **Holy Spirit** is so important that in **two weeks**,  
on the great **Solemnity of Pentecost**,  
we here at St. Bart's are going to **embark** on a new, **one-year spiritual crusade**,  
"**The Year of the Holy Spirit.**"

We are going to have **special events**,  
retreats, guest speakers,  
a parish mission, small groups,  
special books and videos,  
to help us **better understand** the **Holy Spirit**,  
and to help us have a **stronger relationship** with the **Holy Spirit**.

When Jesus spoke to his **disciples** after the **Last Supper**,  
he wanted to **impress** upon their minds several very important **final messages**:  
"I have but one commandment: **Love one another**";  
"Don't ever forget, there is **a place reserved** for each of you **in heaven**";  
and, "I will never abandon you."  
I **give each of you** the gift of the **Holy Spirit.**"