

Sunday 7TH week of Easter A cycle May 17, 2026 Greenwich

We are in the midst of the Church's great novena, the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost, when we pray *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, Come Holy Spirit.

And Jesus fulfills His promise---Pentecost.

The Jewish Feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the Exodus, celebrated God's gift of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, the definitive Covenant between God and His people.

And Christian Pentecost, next Sunday, marks the new outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the people of the New Covenant, made in the blood of the sacrificed Lamb of God, Jesus. And that new gift of the Holy Spirit enflames His followers to this day.

When the Risen Lord Jesus spent "forty days" with the disciples, they exulted and could barely contain their joy.

But distressingly, He told them, "I have to go away again, so that the Spirit can come."

That was as puzzling, as disconcerting, as when He had said, "The Son of Man must be rejected by the chief priests and leaders, and put to death, and then rise on the third day."

Those first disciples hadn't understood why He had to suffer and die; and then they don't understand now why He has to leave them, ascend to the Father, in order to send the Spirit.

I suspect we don't understand either; and we've already received the Spirit, over and over again. Yet we certainly don't understand when the Lord seems to disappear from us, and we wonder if anyone hears our prayer.

Of course, perhaps the reason the Lord withdraws is to remind us that He's a real person, not a projection of our psyches.

In any event, it is not John but Luke who says that Jesus stayed with the first disciples for "forty days" after the Resurrection.

Luke is referring to the custom in which Jewish students studied with a rabbi "forty days," a symbolic number that meant the amount of time it took them to learn the master's teachings well enough to be able to repeat them.

And what lessons were Peter and the others to repeat, and then to practice?

"Love one another, serve one another, forgive one another, as I have loved and served and forgiven you.

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Pray for your enemies. Do good to those who persecute you.

The greatest among you must be the least of all and the servant of all.

I am with you until the end of the world.

Do all this in memory of Me.”

These past forty or so days since Easter, the promised Spirit of the Risen Jesus has been teaching us the same lessons Jesus taught those first students, those first disciples.

All the scripture readings have sought to center our minds and hearts on the coming Kingdom of God.

And to make us instruments and channels of that Kingdom, Jesus sends the Spirit to fashion in us new minds, new hearts, new vision, new consciousness of that power of God among us---in short to plant in us a life of contemplative awareness.

Alive in the Pentecost Spirit, those first students, the early Church, lived the teachings of Rabbi Jesus by becoming, in a favorite Jesuit phrase, contemplatives, in action.

They plunged themselves into the quest for the wisdom of God, through prayer, scripture and sharing their stories of the presence of the divine in their lives.

And they enfleshed that union with God by
serving the poor,
challenging injustice,
reconciling enemies,
making a place at the table for outcasts,
and, inevitably, suffering for the sake of the name of Jesus.

They sought to see the world as God sees the world, and love and serve it as God does, because, in the power of the Spirit, they glimpsed that there is more to the world than simply earth and sea and sky. They recognized it all as compenetrated with the very fire and life of God.

Rabbi Jesus seeks to teach us the same lesson, and to share with us that same Spirit, so that we too can be part of that same mission of salvation.

Jesus, who raises our hearts and minds to heaven,
who tells us that He Himself is the Way,
who says that those who see Him see the Father,
lived a life totally involved in the world around him;
and at the same time was totally attuned to the heart of God,
completely consumed by the will of God for the world.

He was contemplative, in action.

The contemplative Jesus was absorbed in prayer with his Father.

Think of Him on Mount Tabor, transfigured in the glory of God.

Yet that prayer led him down the mountain, back to the dirty, crowded roads of Galilee and Jerusalem.

And that ministry of washing feet and healing hearts led him back again into union with the Father.

And so, He teaches us, as he did those first students. Jesus raised their hearts, and raises ours, to heaven.

But on Ascension morning, His angel, His messenger, asked, “What are you doing, looking up to heaven?”

The Risen and Ascended Lord sent the students back, back to Jerusalem, as He sends us back, back to our homes and offices and schools, back to hospitals and to the homebound, and even to the ends of the earth.

Thus, Jesus reveals to us the contemplative dimension of all life.

Now, before you get nervous and say, “I’m just an ordinary believer, and not much of one at that, and I’m certainly not a mystic,” let me remind you that contemplative prayer is not about esoteric religious experiences. Contemplation has to do with seeing life as it is. Contemplative prayer is not an escape from this world to find another; rather, prayer is a long, loving look at the Real.

Contemplative prayer invites us ordinary people to become extraordinarily conscious of the impelling life of God both within and around us. By it, we seek to live under the impulse of the Spirit of God Who made us to listen to the small, deep voice within that guides us, from the Cross of Christ, to concern for the vastness of a creation not made for us alone.

At our best, we see the meaning of eternity in every moment in time. We have come to know that there is no place where God is not, since we have learned to glimpse God everywhere. God is in suffering and God is in glory. God is in the cosmic and God is in the crucifixions of daily life. The mundane is the stuff of immortality. The daily is the residence of the Divine.

And the great theologian Karl Rahner said, “The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist at all.”

For the mystic, that is, for each follower of Jesus, the entire world is sacramental. Everything speaks of God. Everything unveils God to us. We needn't go looking for stardust in which to discover God. We can glimpse God in the clay of each day.

And yet, marvelously, from the Big Bang and the subsequent explosions and their celestial alchemy came the hydrogen and helium of planet earth, the phosphorus of our bones and the iron of our blood, making us humans composed literally of “star dust.”

That realization would be an excellent starting point for your next prayer.

Here, in both the ordinary challenges of human living, and in the deeper anguish of soul and spirit, loneliness and loss, we can find the Jesus who showed the way, beyond the Crucifixion, to the Ascension, beyond suffering, to Kingdom wholeness and holiness.

Jesus who dwelt among us, who walked the earth and blessed it, also raised our eyes above and beyond the narrow limits of our small lives, showed us other horizons, gave us a world beyond ourselves.

Out of the dregs of the worst the world inflicts, He lifts our eyes and hearts to the vision that transcends the pedestrian. He brings us face to face with the mystical, and reminds us to abide there, all the while we walk the streets of the world.

In these novena days to Pentecost next Sunday, with hope and expectation, we wait upon the Lord to gift us with His Spirit, the Spirit who makes us contemplatives, in action, so that we might meet Him, in Word and prayer and silence, in the poor and in creation, and especially in the Breaking of the Bread.

And the People of God said, Amen.

Easter A 7 2026 Children's MAY 17 2026 Greenwich

AS USUAL, MY REFLECTION TODAY IS GEARED TO THE CHILDREN, BUT YOU PARENTS MIGHT WANT TO PAY ATTENTION, SINCE THE PEOPLE WHO GET THE MOST OUT OF THE CHILDREN'S HOMILIES USUALLY ARE THE ADULTS!

THERE WERE A LOT OF WORDS IN THAT GOSPEL, AND SOMETIMES, EVEN WHEN WE TRY VERY HARD TO LISTEN, WE MISS THINGS.

SO, I WANT TO REMIND YOU OF SOMETHING JESUS SAID, THAT MAYBE WE ALL MISSED

HE SAID, "I PRAY FOR YOU."

THAT MIGHT SOUND FUNNY, SINCE WE PRAY TO JESUS, FOR OURSELVES, FOR EACH OTHER, AND FOR ALL SORTS OF REASONS.

WE PRAY TO HIM WHEN WE ARE HAPPY AND WANT TO SAY THANK YOU.

WE PRAY TO HIM WHEN WE FEEL SCARED OR LONELY AND WANT HIM TO HUG US AND COMFORT US.

WE PRAY TO HIM WHEN WE DID SOMETHING WE KNEW WAS WRONG AND WE ASK HIM TO FORGIVE US.

BUT TODAY HE SAYS HE PRAYS FOR US.

I THINK THAT MEANS THAT HE TALKS WITH HIS FATHER ABOUT EACH ONE OF US PERSONALLY AND INDIVIDUALLY, BY NAME.

HE ASKS THE FATHER'S BLESSING ON EACH ONE OF US.

HE THANKS HIS FATHER FOR GIVING EACH ONE OF US TO HIM AS HIS BROTHER OR HIS SISTER.

HE DELIGHTS IN TELLING HIS FATHER ABOUT EACH OF US.

HE TELLS HIS FATHER HOW MUCH HE TREASURES EACH OF US. IN FACT, HE BEAMS WITH PRIDE AS HE TALKS TO HIS FATHER ABOUT EACH ONE OF US.

AND THEN HIS FATHER DELIGHTS TO CALL EACH ONE OF US HIS BELOVED CHILD.

AND WHEN JESUS PRAYS FOR US, HE SAYS TO HIS FATHER, "LET'S INVITE EACH ONE OF MY BROTHERS, MY SISTERS, INTO OUR HOME AND GIVE EACH ONE OF THEM AN INVITATION TO HAVE DINNER WITH US."

SO, AS JESUS PRAYS FOR US, HE PREPARES A PLACE FOR EACH OF US.

JESUS DOESN'T JUST SIT AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER, RELAXING AFTER HIS TOUGH TIMES ON EARTH.

NO, HE OPENS THE GATES THAT WERE CLOSED WHEN ADAM AND EVE SINNED. HE GOES DOWN TO HELL AND RESCUES ALL THOSE WHO LIVED AND DIED BEFORE HE CAME TO EARTH, AND HE LEADS THEM BACK TO HEAVEN.

AND THAT MEANS THAT NOW ALL OF US ALSO CAN FOLLOW JESUS INTO HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

AND THERE HE SETS A BANQUET TO WELCOME US WHEN HE CALLS US HOME AND THE END OF OUR LIVES.

FINALLY, WHEN JESUS PRAYS FOR US, HE ASKS FOR SOMETHING SPECIAL. HE ASKS HIS FATHER TO GIVE US A GIFT, THE GIFT OF HIS OWN HOLY SPIRIT.

NOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD BREATHES IN US, BRINGS TO LIFE IN US GOD'S OWN DIVINE LIFE.

THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US STRENGTH AND COURAGE WHEN WE GET SCARED,

THE HOLY SPIRIT CONSOLES US WHEN WE HURT,
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES US BACK TO THE RIGHT PATH WHEN WE WANDER IN CONFUSION AND SIN.

THE VERY LIFE OF GOD, LIVING IN US;
THAT'S WHAT'S HAPPENING WHEN WE PRAY,
WHEN WE READ THE SCRIPTURES,

WHEN WE GO TO MASS AND RECEIVE THE EUCHARIST, HOLY COMMUNION, THE VERY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST;

AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IS AT WORK IN US

WHEN WE LOVE ANOTHER,

AND WHEN WE MAKE UP WITH SOMEONE AFTER A FIGHT,

AND WHEN WE ARE GENEROUS RATHER THAN SELFISH,

AND WHEN WE SAY I'M SORRY FOR DOING SOMETHING WRONG.

ALL THOSE ARE WAYS THE HOLY SPIRIT IS WORKING AND LIVING IN US, THE SPIRIT THAT JESUS SENDS US AS HE GOES TO THE FATHER.

SO, JESUS REALLY MEANS IT WHEN HE SAYS HE PRAYS FOR US.

AND NEXT WEEK WE WILL CELEBRATE THE FEAST OF PENTECOST, WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME UPON THE APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES AND FRIENDS OF JESUS. THAT WAS THE FATHER'S ANSWER TO THE PRAYER JESUS OFFERED FOR EACH OF US.

EVERY DAY THIS WEEK, WHEN YOU PRAY WITH JESUS, ASK HIM TO FILL YOU WITH HIS SPIRIT.

HE GAVE YOU HIS SPIRIT WHEN YOU WERE BAPTIZED.

NOW ASK HIM TO GIVE YOU EVEN MORE OF HIS SPIRIT, SO YOU CAN KNOW HOW MUCH JESUS DELIGHTS IN HAVING YOU AS HIS BROTHER, HIS SISTER, AND HOW MUCH HE REJOICES THAT YOU ARE HIS FRIEND. AMEN.

NOW I INVITE THE CHILDREN JUST FROM LEVEL 2 TO GO WITH LOREN. LEVEL 1 AND ALL THE REST OF YOU CAN RETURN TO YOUR PARENTS. THANKS FOR LISTENING. STAY WONDERFUL.

THIS FEAST DAY OF THE ASCENSION GIVES US A
CHANCE TO SAY THANK YOU TO JESUS,

THANK YOU FOR MAKING OUR HUMAN LIFE PART
OF THE TRINITY'S DIVINE LIFE;

THANK YOU FOR MAKING A HOME FOR US AND
SETTING A BANQUET TO WELCOME US WHEN HE CALLS
US HOME;

AND THANK YOU FOR SHARING HIS OWN HOLY
SPIRIT WITH US SO WE CAN LOVE AND PRAY AND LIVE
AS GOD'S OWN BELOVED CHILDREN.

YES, IT'S GOOD FOR US THAT JESUS ASCENDS TO
HIS FATHER. AMEN.