

From The Pastor

Thank you for your prayerful support last weekend as I traveled to California for my sisters' wedding. It was a very successful event with bride and groom dually joined in the Sacrament of Marriage. We enjoyed a very fine reception at the couple's home in Palm Springs. After a couple of days of clean up and set up at the house we were able to enjoy the local surroundings. After early morning walks in the desert and surrounding hills, the pool at the Holiday Inn became quite popular. More than twenty of us traveled from Michigan and other states for the occasion. I am happy to report that everyone got along and were quite accommodating to the event.

I am happy to report that we had a very successful first week in the CSA. We have collected approximately twenty-three thousands dollars in both cash and pledges. This is well ahead of last year. I am very encouraged by this strong start, and edified at your generous response. I am grateful for the Stewardship Commission and their work in this regard. Let's all pray for continued success. Thank you.

As we draw closer to the feast of Pentecost, the readings express the action and fruit of the Holy Spirit in the early Church, and in the words of Jesus. These themes are important today as we attend to the action of God through the Holy Spirit in our time. The danger is to presume the time of the Holy Spirit is over. It is not, and will never be. The Holy Spirit is the action and presence of God for all time and all peoples. The essence and life of the Church is dependant on the presence and action of the Holy Spirit.

Not unlike today, there were great tensions in the early Church regarding rules and practices of the faith. In their day, the issue was circumcision and the keeping of the Mosaic Law after baptism. The action of the Holy Spirit made it clear that God intended the gift of salvation to be for all peoples and was not to be limited by national identity or religious practice. Through the Spirit, the issue was resolved and the Gentiles were received into the gospel without the burden of circumcision or all the Jewish ritual practices.

The vision of John in the second reading images heaven and the throne of God. In the heavenly city there is no temple because Jesus himself is the new temple of God's presence in heaven and on earth. Jesus is the Lamb, the Almighty One on the throne. The glory of the Lamb, the light of God revealed through the Son makes the necessity for sun or moon obsolete. Jesus is the glory of God because he has revealed the hidden richness and depth of the divine love of the Father.

In the gospel, Jesus begins to explain the gift and the necessity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is talked about only in the context of the love of the Father and the Son. "Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our dwelling in them". To recognize the Holy Spirit, a believer must first have love for Jesus. To love Jesus is to believe in him. With this love and faith, a believer has the capacity to receive and know the divine love that comes from the Father. The fruit or evidence of the presence of God is our love for one another.

Consistently through these middle chapters of John's gospel, Jesus points to the Father as the source and direction of his love. To see Jesus is to see the Father; to love Jesus is to love the Father and to be loved by Him. Jesus says or does nothing without first hearing or receiving it from the Father. Jesus' primary role and desire is to reveal the Father, as he says: 'the world must know that I love the Father'. This love of Father and Son is the Holy Spirit.

The context for today's reading is the Last Supper. Jesus is preparing the disciples for his death and departure. Yet, he is quick to say that they, nor we, will be orphaned or abandoned. The Father will send in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit who will remind and teach all believers.

Jesus is the perfect image of the Father's love, and that love of the Father and the Son are now present in us through the Holy Spirit. This is the unity and the power of the Trinity. We are one in God, and God is one in us through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The axis or the 'physics' of this divine presence is our love for God and one another. The Spirit alone is the source of love.

This was evident to me more personally this past weekend as I could see and perceive the presence of my father as we celebrated my sister's wedding. Children are an image of their parents. They reflect the life they have received from those who brought them into life. My dad's presence was very evident in a spirit of generosity and cooperation rooted in love. Without such love, any human endeavor could become quite contentious. It was evident to me that the Holy Spirit was present and active in our being together. It was clear my parents were present in spirit as well. The Spirit brings or gives the peace of Jesus. The peace of Jesus is the confidence and surety of our salvation.

We are soliciting names of interested parties to serve on the Parish Council. If interested in this important ministry, please leave your name with me or with a current Council member. New names will be drawn on Pentecost Sunday.

Father John Esper