

From The Pastor

Come Holy Spirit; enkindle in our hearts the fire of your love, that we may renew the face of the earth. Touch deeply the minds and the hearts of those confirmed in our parish today. Fill them with love in the knowledge and truth of Jesus Christ. Stir in them a deep desire to know Jesus and seek his presence in their lives. Holy Spirit of God, feast of divine love, confirm in these young men and woman, as in all of us, the transforming power of conversion. Heal our hurts, calm our fears, and forgive our sins. Spirit of truth and life, teach us to love the Word of God, and to seek Jesus in all we do. Spirit of love, make each of us a mature example and witness to others of what we believe and follow in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Congratulations to all those confirmed this Saturday evening. This is an essential and significant step for you in your maturing life of faith. Faith is always God's gift. This weekend, you have the opportunity to personally, and consciously say yes to Jesus. Jesus will hear your yes however timid or uncertain it may be. This is not a once and for all yes. Today is the beginning of a new opportunity to know and follow Jesus as the source and center of your life. Your yes today is not a perfect yes, but it is a beginning. Love does not come to full bloom over night. As you speak your yes to Jesus from that quiet place in your heart, Jesus is quite aware of all your questions and uncertainties. Jesus honors you as you are, and will inform your faith through the power of the Holy Spirit.

As you have learned, the Holy Spirit is the love of God. Love is the source and happiness of our lives. I know all of you are loving persons who seek the peace of Jesus by living lives marked by love. None of us does this perfectly; we all fall short in loving as we would most prefer. Life inevitably offers its wounds and hurts which make us vulnerable and hesitant to put ourselves out there in the name of love. This is why we have been given the redemptive freedom gained for us in Christ Jesus. This is why we absolutely need the life and love of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches us truth and defends us against the subtle deceptions of the evil one. The power of love that is the Holy Spirit is the power that forgives our sins in Jesus.

You do not need to be afraid. As you give your yes to Jesus as an act of faith, he will stand with you through thick and thin. The tension is that we forget Jesus and the love God has for us. We begin to go our own way and if we pray at all, it is to ask God to bless the plans we have made for ourselves. The better way is to always stay close to Jesus. Seek and make your plans in him first and foremost. This will not make your life perfect or without pain, but it will give you an inner peace and security that you will find in no other way.

When you fail, and you will, because we all do, give your sins and your sadness to Jesus. Do not leave Jesus or feel afraid of him because you have 'been bad'. We are all sinners, yet we are invited to come to Jesus especially when we feel small, wounded, broken, or sinful. God's love for you is without end. Make a consistent practice of praying everyday. Your life with God, in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit is a relationship. Mature and confident relationships need constant care and attention. Bring anything to Jesus that is on your mind and heart. Make the relationship real. Jesus is more real than you could ever imagine. We have many passing or superficial relationships in life; Jesus should not be one of them.

As you receive the grace of the Sacrament of Confirmation, go forward with a new confidence and inner security. You are now a full member of the Church, and you have been confirmed in the love of the Holy Spirit. You have the Holy Spirit, the root and source of divine love. May this love fill you with joy and hope, and inspire you to be the loving person you are made to be.

A warm welcome to Monsignor John Zenz, who is the Episcopal Vicar of our region. I am personally grateful for his presence and the ministry he offers on our behalf. Please help me to offer a warm welcome to Monsignor Zenz.

The image of the vine and the branches is as ancient as it is intimate. Early in the Old Testament period, Israel is described as the vineyard of the Lord. A vineyard can be a beautiful and peaceful place, yet it needs constant care and attention to bear its fruit. If anything, the vine and branch image is one of relationship. Remaining connected insures that life in love will continue. To be separated from the vine, for whatever reason or choice, is sure death to the disconnected branch.

The image is also one of conversion and growth. It seems quite shocking that Jesus himself is 'pruned' by the Father that he may bear greater fruit. If Jesus accepts pruning, how could we resist? Every vine has branches that are barren. These ones are pruned off so the fruitful ones will have more nourishment to produce greater fruit.

We all have things in our lives that do not bear much fruit, and other things that are decidedly negative that directly hurt us and others. Let Jesus prune those things that are hindering the great fruit of love that you are in him. You will be happier, and more free to give and receive love.