

*“On behalf of Good Shepherd Parish community, I would like to welcome all guests and visitors today. If you are visiting, please raise your hand, so that those around you can greet you after Mass. Our restrooms are located...”*

Have you ever wished you could experience Jesus as the first disciples did? Experience seeing Him with your BODILY eyes, hearing Him with your BODILY ears? When you watch the Chosen series, you get an idea of what it would be like to do this, to be one of Jesus' first disciples, to follow Him and participate with Him in His Mission of saving the world. But did you know that TODAY, we can experience the Presence and power of Jesus in an even more intimate way than the first disciples, even though we can't see him with these eyes or hear him with these ears?

Before His Ascension, He said to the apostles, "I am going to my Father.... Behold, I am with you always" (Mt 28:20). Isn't that a bit strange? Imagine saying to your friends who just hosted you for dinner, "I have to go now, and I will stay for dessert." He says, "I AM with you always", and then He ascends into Heaven. What does He mean?

To understand what He means, we have to look to next weekend. Anyone know what Feast we celebrate next weekend? Pentecost. Ascension and Pentecost go together. Jesus said to the apostles, "It is better for you that I go, for if I do not go, the Advocate (the Holy Spirit) will not come to you..." In other words, the Ascension had to happen in order for Pentecost to happen. No Ascension, No Pentecost. Because of Jesus' Ascension we can experience Pentecost, and because of Pentecost, He can not only be WITH us, but He can also now live IN us, in a way that is MORE intimate than the way He was with the first disciples!

Before He ascended, His presence was limited, in a certain sense. His physical Body could only be in one place at one time. He couldn't be with the apostles on the mountain, and at the same time, be with the other disciples in another city. BUT AFTER His Ascension, after He sent His Holy Spirit at Pentecost, His presence is now unlimited. He can now be IN us, in the hearts of all who LOVE HIM AND KEEP HIS WORD! Last weekend He told us, "Whoever LOVES me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him." How do we know if we truly LOVE Him? Jesus says, "Whoever has my COMMANDMENTS and observes them is the one who loves me."

Also, after the Ascension, Jesus comes INTO OUR SOULS in all the sacraments, THROUGH His Holy Spirit. Pope St Leo said, His "visible presence has passed into the

sacraments..." Wherever there are sacraments, there is Jesus. In every baptism, In every Confirmation, In every Confession, In every Anointing of the Sick, In every celebration of Holy Matrimony or Holy Orders, He comes INTO OUR SOULS, spiritually, in His Holy Spirit.

AND In the Eucharist, He is present not only spiritually, but also BODILY. At every Mass, and In every tabernacle of every Catholic Church, He is present in His BODILY presence.

Because of Jesus' Ascension, He gave us Pentecost, and because of Pentecost, He can not only be WITH us, but He can also now live IN us.

Our parish Envisioning Team has been meeting to discover God's Vision for our parish. At our last meeting, we reviewed the summaries of the notes from the Listening Sessions we had at our parish for the worldwide Synod. These summaries were forwarded to the diocese, and will be forwarded to the US Bishops and then to Rome. Next year, the pope and the bishops at the Synod will look at these summaries to discover what the Holy Spirit is saying to the whole Church. But data-gathering wasn't the only purpose of the listening sessions. The listening sessions were an end in themselves, letting parishioners to listen and learn from each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and His Church.

Reading the summary of our listening sessions, you can see how many people have experienced the presence of Jesus in their hearts and in the hearts of others. People talked about God's presence or help in their lives, in bad times AND in good times.

- Someone said that Bad times have brought them closer to God.
- One person said that she was aware that her Guardian Angel protected her even after she turned her back on God.
- Another person said she is Happier every day as she gets older, learning to trust God more each day, worry less.
- One described how a perfect stranger reached out at church to offer them comfort
- One participant shared how Jesus helped them to beat alcoholism.

These are just some of the ways that Jesus has with you AND IN you.

Pentecost is next weekend, will you and I be prepared? [PAUSE] The best way to prepare is to pray for the Holy Spirit, like Mary and the Apostles did before Pentecost. Each day this week, will you join me in praying for the Holy Spirit FOR

OUR WHOLE PARISH? Repeat after me "Come Holy Spirit... ENKINDLE IN US... THE FIRE OF YOUR LOVE"

#### ANNOUNCE

One of the goals of our Survey, AND one of the requests from our Listening Sessions, is to foster community and fellowship. For that reason, we will have Fellowship Weekends the 2nd weekend of month, with refreshments served after Mass at each of our parish sites. Our first Fellowship weekend will begin in June.

Also, to promote community, our parish Envisioning Team and I have decided to resume the celebration of Birthdays, Anniversaries, AND as requested in a Listening Session, BAPTISM DAYS. I will invite anyone celebrating to come to the altar, and then bless them with an official blessing from the Book of Blessings. If there is a baptism day, we'll sing "Happy baptism day to you, happy baptism day to you, May the Lord Bless and Keep You, happy baptism day to you", instead of the person's name. If there are multiple people celebrating more than one type of event, for example, a birthday and a baptism day, I will not read the official blessing, but we will all simply sing, "May the dear Lord bless you, may the dear Lord bless you, may the Lord bless and keep you, may the dear Lord bless you!" Is anyone here celebrating their birthday, anniversary, or baptism days this week?

#### **Blessing of Married Couples (Book of Blessings)**

Almighty and eternal God, you have so exalted the unbreakable bond of marriage that it has become the sacramental sign of your Son's union with the Church as his spouse. Look with favor on N. and N., whom you have united in marriage, as they ask for your help and the protection of the Virgin Mary. They pray that in good times and in bad they will grow in love for each other; that they will resolve to be of one heart in the bond of peace. Lord, in their struggles let them rejoice that you are near to help them; in their needs let them know that you are there to rescue them; in their joys let them see that you are the source and completion of every happiness. Through Christ our Lord.

#### **Blessing of Birthdays (Book of Blessings)**

Loving God, you created all the people of the world and you know each of us by name. We thank you for N., who today celebrates his/her birthday. Bless him/her with your love and friendship that he/she may grow in wisdom, knowledge, and grace. May he/she love his/her family always and be faithful to his/her friends. Through Christ our Lord.