

6 Easter A SML 2023

Jn 14:15-21

Five times at the Last Supper, Our Blessed Lord told His disciples about the Holy Spirit. The first of the five is this morning's gospel:

1. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you always, the Spirit of Truth." (JN 14:16)
2. "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – He will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you." (JN 14:26)
3. "When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me." (JN 15:26)
4. "But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you." (JN 16:7)
5. "But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, He will guide you to all truth." (JN 16:13)

Looking over my own lifetime, there were times the Holy Spirit came to me, in the person of my mother. I could share with you memories of my mother cleaning my bloody knees and wiping my

dirty nose as could each of us, but I'd like to share with you insights I have learned from my mother, which speak volumes of the presence of the Holy Spirit and how she taught me the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The first words my mother said to me in the kitchen that Saturday morning I told her of my intentions to pursue the priesthood, are words could never repeat from the pulpit. Not only will I never forget them, but I will never forget the words that followed later that afternoon after she had time to absorb what I said that morning. "Your father and I think you have not picked an easy life. But we want you to be happy." Her support for my vocation was very evident to me over the years with her words of advice. Whenever I would tell her of a parishioner who I thought had unreasonable expectations, my mother would say something like, "Dan, they nailed Christ to the cross. What makes you think you're going to do any better?" One time, the Bishop was confiding in me an unreasonable expectation placed upon him. Bishop, take it from my mother. "They nailed Christ to the cross. What makes you think you're going to do any better?" The Spirit's gift of understanding.

My mother taught me to have presence of mind, and to be a leader. There are many times when I needed that. In disaster she is

calm and resolute. Forget to wipe down the bathroom tiles after a shower and she'll go ballistic, but when my father was diagnosed with cancer, she remained strong.

I have preached before that our family lost my three year old nephew in a car accident on 206. We were all present at the hospital when the doctor caring for my nephew Geoffrey came out to deliver his awful prognosis that her Grandson was brain dead. My Mother literally stood up, and placed herself between the doctor and my brother, and took that news for him like a bullet, visibly wincing as she tried to shield him from its devastating blow. Men and women play special, unique roles in a family. My mother has helped me to recognize the strength of women. The Spirit's gift of fortitude.

My mother was the one who taught me about the birds and the bees, in her exact terms, "the sacredness of the marital embrace." I remember her thoughts and advice, and I have used those same words with my students that I have taught over the years, because they were perfect. As an adult, I look back and realize her words were well chosen and I have reflected upon her beautiful advice many times in my life. The Spirit's gift of wisdom and counsel.

I find many of my contemporaries do not have an adequate appreciation of the past. I have an eye for history and a sense of the

moment because of my mother.

It was through my mother that I became so truly amazed at how this country pulled together during World War II. It was my mother's memories of her brother and cousins going off to war that have helped me to understand what an amazing time that must have been.

Although I have read very little on the assassination of President Kennedy, I have walked through the Sixth Floor Museum in Dallas. But my appreciation of the emotion of that tragedy comes from my mother's account of that incredibly sad week.

My mother was also affected by the Watergate hearings. I remember her calling us in to watch television in the middle of the afternoon, saying "This is history in the making!" There have been many times when I have explained some of these events to friends my age, and credit my mother with my appreciation of those times in our country's history. The Spirit's gift of knowledge.

My Mother is a woman of prayer. Her four children were given household chores. I remember as a primary grader dusting my Mom and Dad's bedroom. And I remember week after week, taking her prayer book and a few special Novena holy cards off her nightstand each week to dust. After our father died and it was time

to transition Mom to assisted living, we packed up her things. And on my mother's night stand were the same prayer book, more worn than it was 40 years earlier, and novena cards, just as worn. The Spirit's gift of piety.

Finally, for the first 26 years of my priesthood, whenever I would offer the Mass and preach, and my mother was in the congregation, I would always go back to the chair, and she would always, without fail, give me the "thumbs up sign," because she knew I did my level best, something she taught her children. If I brought home from school a C on a test, she would ask me, "If you did your level best, that C is as good as an A to me." I would go back and reread some of the homilies I gave in my early years of priesthood, and some of those homilies were pretty bad, they were awful, but I always did my best, and that's why I always got a thumbs up. Today is my turn. I'll finish this homily with a thumbs up to her in heaven! "Thumbs up, Mom, thumbs up!"