

PROMISES AND GIFTS

August 2025

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In the Easter Season, as we get closer to Pentecost, the gospel readings at Mass are taken from the Last Supper Discourse in John's Gospel. I was especially impressed this year with the number of times Jesus promises the Apostles - and us - various gifts. I would like to identify some of those promises and gifts here.

HOLY SPIRIT

The greatest gift Jesus promises is, of course, the Holy Spirit. In John 14:16-17, Jesus says: "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, because He abides with you, and will be in you." Jesus also promises that the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, would remind the Apostles of all that He said to them (cf. John 14:25-26).

Then Jesus promises that the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, would bear witness to Himself, even as the Apostles would do also (cf. John 15:26-27).

Jesus says that it is better for Him to go away so that the Paraclete will come. And the Paraclete will "convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment" (cf. John 16:7-8). Finally, the Spirit of truth will guide us into the truth and will glorify Jesus (cf. 16:13-14).

We cannot overstate the importance of the gift of the Holy Spirit or His role in the Church and in our own lives!

LOVE

Jesus speaks about love in the Last Supper Discourse: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love" (John 15:9). Jesus connects "abiding in His love" with

"keeping His commandments" (cf. John 14:21; 15:10). Love and obedience are connected here and in several other places in the gospel and letters of John.

Jesus also connects the receiving of His gift of love with our obligation of loving others (cf. John 13:34-35).

In other New Testament passages, it is made clear that we can only love others because God has first loved us (cf. 1 John 4:19), and that God's love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5).

PEACE

Jesus promises us His great gift of peace. He says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27). The first verse of this chapter is the same exhortation, "Let not your hearts be troubled" (John 14:1).

Jesus promises to give His peace. Our part is to receive it and hold on to it.

JOY

Jesus makes a promise of joy. "These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full" (John 15:11). Then, in John 16:22, Jesus promises that even though the Apostles have sorrow now, He would see them again and they would rejoice. He says, "no one will take your joy away from you." Jesus then urges them to ask in His name: "Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (cf. John 16:24).

My prayer, and I'm sure yours as well is, "Lord, give us the fullness of your joy."

UNITY AND GLORY

In His High Priestly Prayer to the Father, Jesus says that He is praying "not for these only (the Apostles) but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they all be one, even as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21). The Lord Jesus is praying that our unity will resemble that of the Holy Trinity! This calls to mind the motto of Pope Leo XIV: *In Illo Uno Unum*...In the One, we are one.

Jesus then promises to give us the glory which the Father has given Him, "that they may be one even as we are one" (cf. John 17:22). This further emphasizes that it is glory of God that brings about our unity.

It is truly overwhelming that in this prayer for us believers the night before His Passion and Death, Jesus asks the Father for the gifts of unity, glory and love for us who believe in Him!

CONCLUSION

These are tremendous gifts promised by Jesus! Doesn't everyone want more love, joy, and peace in their lives? Jesus promises to give us these gifts. Moreover, what we all long for in the deepest part of our being is **union with God** - which Jesus also promised. And Jesus fulfills this promise by sending us the Holy Spirit, another Paraclete, to be with us and in us, to bring us into close union and communion with God.

Considering all these promises and gifts, what else can we say but ***Deo Gratias* - thanks be to God!**